

CINEFANTASTIQUE

May 1985

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LORD OF LIGHT

From **STAR WARS** laser apprentice, to **DREAMSCAPE** supervisor, the career of Peter Kuran.

CAT'S EYE

Stephen King on filming his Night Shift horror stories

FRANKENWEENIE

Disney's gentle spoof of the classic Universal horror film

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The magazine with a "Sense of Wonder."

MAY, 1985

You may not recognize the name Peter Kuran, but you've doubtless seen and marvelled at his work in some of the most popular horror, fantasy and science fiction films of the past several years. Kuran is a specialist in postproduction optical effects, creating imagery that can't be filmed, and putting it into a scene so that it looks like it belongs there. We've dubbed him the Lord of Light because, in the field of animation rotoscoping, Kuran has no peer.

We've covered Kuran's work and that of his company, Visual Concept Engineering, regularly in our pages: articles on filming the spaceship from *THE THING*, the demon ghosts of *CONAN, THE BARBARIAN*, the radiation field that killed Spock in *STAR TREK II*, etc. In this issue we detail Kuran's most ambitious assignment to date, supervising the effects in last summer's imaginative science fiction exercise, *DREAMSCAPE*.

While Kuran has been open in talking about his work, he's remained a kind of elusive figure behind it. Unlike other effects technicians who are often seen posed with their handiwork, be it models, makeups, or miniatures, Kuran has been camera shy, perhaps because his field of expertise is the least glamorous of all the effects disciplines. While the finished product may be exciting, even spectacular, a picture of Kuran at work would probably show his figure hunched in the darkness over a light table or animation stand. Not very exciting.

As you can see by this issue's cover, we persuaded Kuran to come out of the animation closet. While our solution may have been obvious—pose Kuran with the very effects he's become famous for—the answer involved quite a lot of work, all of which was beyond the expertise of this magazine. The cover is a kind of self-portrait by Kuran, executed by VCE technicians at our request, employing the same techniques used in their film work. But remember, the printed page doesn't do it justice. Kuran's work only comes alive in the dancing light of a projected image.

Frederick S. Clarke



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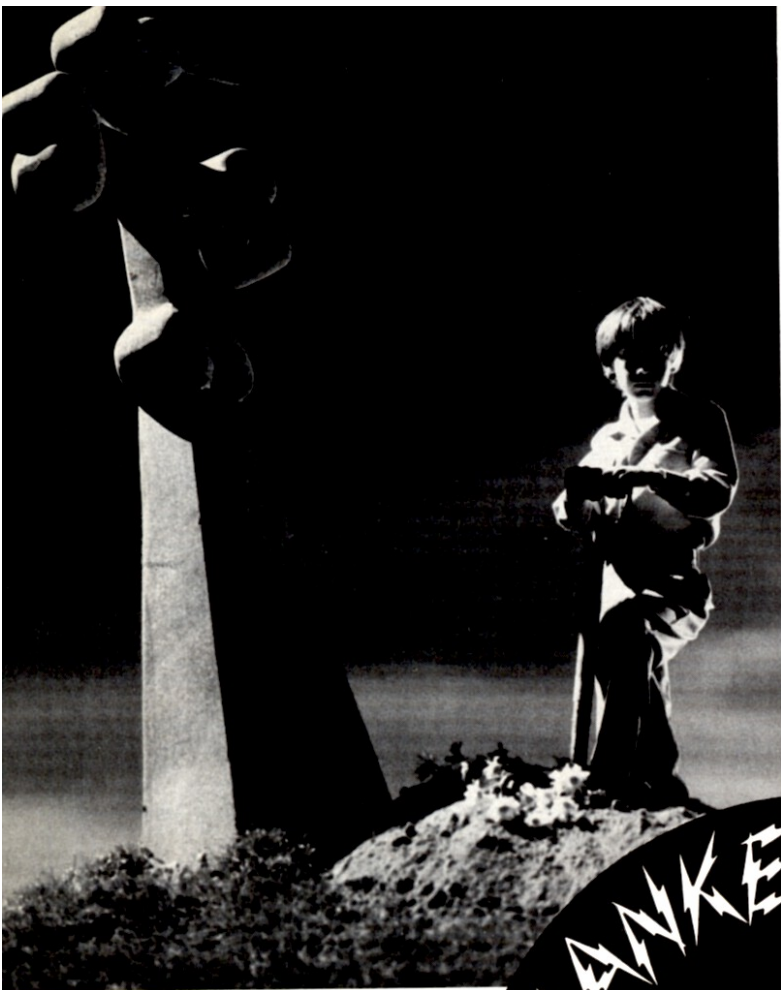
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by Michael Mayo

Probably the last studio on earth you'd expect to do yet another version of the Frankenstein legend is Walt Disney Studios, but the ever-changing World of Walt has done just that. The latest short film from the studio, **FRANKENWEENIE**, is an affectionate tribute to the James Whale film starring Boris Karloff, designed and directed by mad genius Tim Burton with a sly but subtle eye for understated parody that may turn this thirty minute featurette into Disney's first modern cult classic.

Burton's rewrite of Whale's 1931 version of Mary Shelley's classic, with a script by Lenny Rips, turns the story into its gentlest version yet. Barret Oliver's beloved dog, Sparky, is killed in an accident. Oliver buries the dog, but believes he may have a chance to bring the dog back to life when his weird science teacher, played by Paul Bartel, shows him how you can make a frog's leg jump using electricity. Oliver decides to do his teacher one better and patches the dog back together, shooting it full of electricity in an attic laboratory jerry-rigged with makeshift electrical equipment.

Miraculously, the equipment works and Sparky is brought back to life. Oliver then tries to keep the dog in the attic so his unknowing parents, played by Shelley Duvall and Daniel Stern, won't know what's going on. The dog manages

to slip out though and is briefly glimpsed by neighbors, who set the neighborhood abuzz with stories of a monster that seems to be coming from the house. Despondent that he seems about to lose his dog again, Oliver retreats to the tattered windmill on an abandoned miniature golf course. Sparky goes out looking for him, and is followed by the angry neighbors to the golf course where they set the windmill ablaze unaware that Oliver is in it. Overcome by smoke, Oliver falls unconscious and is saved only

when Sparky manages to drag him outside. The exertion is too much for the dog though, and Sparky dies again from the effort of rescuing his master. The neighbors, however, now see the error of their ways and make their own effort to rescue the dog. Gathering their automobiles in a circle, they get out their jumper cables, hook them all on Sparky's electrodes, and jump-start the dog back to life. Everyone lives happily ever after.

FRANKENWEENIE is the first theatrical featurette for 25 year-old

Tim Burton directs a short film homage to **FRANKENSTEIN** for Walt Disney Productions.

Tim Burton, who got the idea while watching the original Universal film. "I had just seen **FRANKENSTEIN** again and started thinking—for some reason—about a dog I had when I was young. I started thinking just how incredible the whole idea of **FRANKENSTEIN** really is, of bringing something dead back to life. But all the versions of it so far have just dealt with the horrible aspects of the idea. At some point, the idea of my dog and **FRANKENSTEIN** just connected and we started developing it. I put the idea on storyboards and pitched it to Richard Berger [production chief at Walt Disney] and he liked it. We got a writer named Lenny Rips to write the script and continued to develop it from there."

At this point, the more prosaic but vital talents of casting and deal-making were needed. For these, Burton turned to Julie Hickson, a 35 year-old ex-executive from Disney's story department who discovered Burton and his talents while he was involved in designing an eventually aborted project for Disney called **TRICK OR TREAT**.

"I had been an executive in the story department about two years when I met Tim on the **TRICK OR TREAT** project, and I was just amazed and intrigued by his work and talent," said Hickson. "When you go to the movies today, I think you're lucky if you see more than two real ideas on the screen; and I think that if you look at Tim's



Left: Victor Frankenstein (Barret Oliver) buries his pet dog, Sparky, who was mangled by an automobile. Middle: After Victor has brought his pet back to life, he takes refuge from angry neighbors in a windmill on a miniature golf course near his home. Right: When the windmill is set afire, Victor is dragged to safety by his faithful pet.

drawings, aside from the artistry involved, there's a lot of ideas there . . . they're really jammed packed, and it's exciting to work for someone like that. I tried to help get TRICK OR TREAT off the ground. That didn't work out, but we started working together, and after Tim got to do VINCENT [13:4:10] and started working on FRANKENWEENIE, I left the story department and Richard Berger asked me to produce the film for Tim."

At 25, Burton is yet another member of the Cal Arts mafia to make his home at Disney Studios, but there are few who have had their ambitions start so close to the studio. "I was actually born here in Burbank," said Burton, "right across the street at St. Josephs. I'm sure there are a lot of people who dream of working at Disney, but growing up in Burbank with the studio right here really gets to you.

"I came here first when I was 13, just to visit and ask what I would have to do to work here," continued Burton. "They told me the standard stuff about going to school and they said a good place to go would be the California Institute of the Arts. I hate school, but Cal Arts isn't your basic college . . . it was a place where I could basically get away with a lot of stuff. So I went to Cal Arts for a couple of years, did some other stuff on the side during the summer, then came here. I don't know

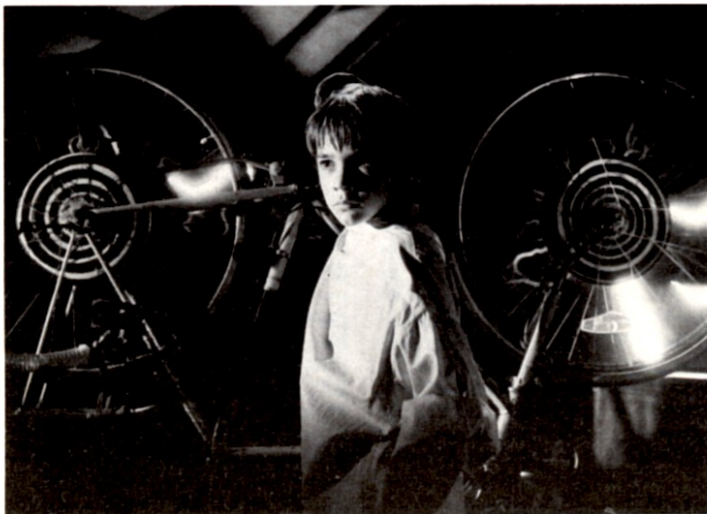
if it's the same now or not, but back then the program involved doing a film at the end of the year. The Disney people would come out and pick out a few people . . . the few, the proud, and that's how I got here. I started in animation, worked a year on THE FOX AND THE HOUND, then did some concept and development on about ten projects that never went anywhere. I met Julie Hickson at one meeting on TRICK OR TREAT where I found that she was the only one who understood what I was doing,

so we started working together."

"We did a version of HANSEL AND GRETEL for the Disney Channel that didn't turn out to be a big hit," said Hickson, smiling about it. "It was a candy-land martial arts version of the story with an all-oriental cast that didn't have a big budget but we had a lot of fun doing it. I think it showed all of one time, at Halloween."

To develop FRANKENWEENIE and make sure it showed more than one time, Hickson decided to try and get some "name" actors.

In his attic laboratory, Victor shocks Sparky back to life. The electrical apparatus by Kenneth Strickfadden was used in the filming of the original FRANKENSTEIN.



The first place she started was with Shelley Duval, who had once tried to sell Disney on the idea of her cable-tv series FAERIE TALE THEATRE.

"I really believe that you can get anybody you want if you just get the right kind of material that they can respond to," said Hickson. "I only knew Shelley a little, but I just had the feeling that she'd understand what we were trying to do because she had to fight to get FAERIE TALE THEATRE going with just her vision of it and hardly any money. So I thought that if I could just get to her directly, she'd respond to it. So I wrote her a letter and she read the stuff and a dialog began and she was terrific about it. Once I had her, it was easier to get people like Daniel Stern, because he wanted to work with her. Paul Bartel was incredible too, because he loved the material and really believes in supporting short films. The project gained a momentum that was just magical because usually you don't get the actors you want for something, but here we did. Basically, we got this cast for no money because they all wanted to do it."

Another treat for fans of *cinefantastique* is that the more sharp-eyed aficionados will recognize the original Kenneth Strickfadden electrical equipment for Universal's FRANKENSTEIN integrated into

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MICHAEL CRICHTON

on robots, writing and directing, science fiction, and RUNAWAY.

by Dennis K. Fischer

Trailing slightly behind Stephen King as the genre author with the most film adaptations of his work, Michael Crichton has produced an interesting body of work, often cautioning his audience about the potential dangers of technology.

Over-confidence and lack of restraint leads to an alien pestilence in *The Andromeda Strain*; a man is accidentally turned into a killer by a brain implant in *The Terminal Man*; computer-generated imagery capable of swaying public opinion is part of an evil power scheme in *LOOKER*; and killer robots endanger mankind in *WESTWORLD* and now in *RUNAWAY*. Crichton directed as well as wrote the latter three films.

The robots seen in Crichton's latest film, *RUNAWAY*, more accurately reflect what robots of the future will be like, each designed for a specific function. Crichton feels that setting the film a few short years away was integral to the story and important to the point he wanted to make.

"It's not contemporary, but we shot it as if it was," he explained. "We've pushed the technology into the background because we said that these characters are accustomed to it, they're not interested in it, they don't care about it. It practically never occupies center stage."

"It is a vision of the future, which I think in its physical settings is attractive," continued Crichton. "My idea is that we're sick of the future being depicted as trashed-out, post-holocaust savagery. My feeling is that with the introduction of new technology basically nothing changes."

While Crichton primarily thinks of *RUNAWAY* as an enjoyable action picture, he does admit to having a few ideas which underline and inform its story. "As robots

"I'm sick of the future being depicted as trashed-out, post-holocaust savagery. My feeling is that basically the introduction of new technology changes nothing."



Director Michael Crichton and star Tom Selleck during filming of *RUNAWAY*.

begin to be introduced into our society, I think it's important to have a perspective about them," he said. "We need to begin to develop a sense about what is different in the computer age. The other concern I have is the role of changing technology. I'm a firm believer that technology can always be used for good or for bad. So we have a villain and a hero who both use technology. I hope audiences start to be clear about technology because I think it's going to be important in the world in which we live."

Crichton is a man who has worn many hats. He received a B.A. degree in Anthropology from Harvard and later received an M.D. degree. To help put himself through medical school, he wrote several potboilers under the names John Lange and Jeffrey Hudson. One of these, *A Case for Need* won an Edgar Award from the Mystery Writers of America and was later filmed by Blake Edwards as *THE CAREY TREATMENT*. Another book, *Binary* became the basis of the TV movie *PURSUIT* which

served as Crichton's directing debut.

Crichton came to prominent attention with his bestseller *The Andromeda Strain* which Robert Wise turned into a successful and compelling film in 1971. The science fiction community attacked the book, perhaps out of envy because the bestseller was written by someone not of their ranks. "The science fiction community has always had the option of defining or not defining more mainstream things as science fiction," he said. "At the time *Andromeda Strain* was written, people would argue about whether *Fail Safe* was science fiction, a very popular book in the 1960's. They'd argue whether *DR. STRANGELOVE* was science fiction or social comedy."

"I read a lot of science fiction when I was a kid, but it never crossed my mind that *The Andromeda Strain* was science fiction. From where I sit, all kinds of people who don't know what science fiction is or who aren't science fiction fans would read it as fiction. Hardcore science fiction fans would say this is nuts. Some people say it is SF, and some people say it's not."

One of the main complaints critics had about the book was that the story's central conflict, in *deus ex machina* fashion, managed to solve itself. The *Andromeda strain* mutates into something harmless. Crichton feels the critics missed the point. "The end was critical to the intent of the book, which was to present a situation where nothing that the scientists did would have any positive effect, and some of the things they did could make it worse. To the extent that it's unsatisfying, that's the intention. The book is quite cynical. It takes a dim view of human activity. The government messes up, the scientists miss everything and make all

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CAT'S EYE

Horror master Stephen King blends stories from "Night Shift" with a dash of macabre humor.

By Tim Hewitt

Undaunted by the recent barrage of Stephen King films, principle photography on the film adaptation of King's *Cat's Eye* wrapped on August 4 at the North Carolina Film Corporation in Wilmington, N.C. under the direction of Lewis Teague, who also directed *CUJO*. *CAT'S EYE*, a Dino De Laurentiis production, is the first feature filmed entirely at the producer's new stateside facility.

With release slated for this Fall (read Halloween), *CAT'S EYE* will be the seventh Stephen King work filmed in two years' time. The abundance of King films doesn't trouble producer Martha Schumacher, who served as associate producer on *FIRESTARTER*.

"We don't see any danger of the possibility that audiences may soon tire at the prospect of another Stephen King film," she said. "He is very popular with audiences right now and he's an important American writer. In fact, he's written another screenplay for us."

Schumacher is confident that *CAT'S EYE* will appeal to a wider audience than would normally be expected of a Stephen King film because "this film isn't like other Stephen King films. There's a lot of humor in this, black humor." *CAT'S EYE* will no doubt be aided by two other factors in its search for audience attention. One is rating. *CAT'S EYE* will be the first Stephen King film to avoid the audience-narrowing R. "This is definitely a PG film," said Schumacher, "or possibly a PG-13 depending on how that goes."

The second factor is Stephen King. *CAT'S EYE* marks King's first active involvement in a film bearing his name since *CREEPSHOW*. "I loved what I had," said King of his screenplay, "and frankly, I didn't want anyone else to screw around with it. So I stuck it out and I went down the line with it. There are some things in the picture now that I'm not crazy about, but mostly everything I do like."

CAT'S EYE, similarly to *CREEPSHOW*, is an anthology film. The plot is made up of two stories from King's *Night Shift* collection,



Drew Barrymore and her pet cat are the film's heroes, from an original story by Stephen King used as linking device for an anthology of King's "Night Shift" tales.

"The Ledge" and "Quitter's, Inc.," and an original script titled "The General." The film follows the adventures of a wandering feline which comes into the company of a high-rolling gambler who forces his wife's lover (Robert Hays) to walk the ledge of a high-rise penthouse, the head of "Quitter's, Inc." who promises that his new client (James Woods) will stop smoking or else, and finally a little girl (Drew Barrymore) whose life is threatened by a monster. Also starring in the various episodes are Candy Clark, Alan King, and Patti LuPone.

CAT'S EYE had a lengthy devel-

opment that began when Dino De Laurentiis started acquiring rights to several of the *Night Shift* stories from, among others, Milton Subotsky, former head of Amicus Pictures, much to King's satisfaction.

"I sometimes refer to [Subotsky] as the Hubert Humphrey of horror pictures who thinks that all horror pictures should be somehow uplifting," said King. "But, I wanted to see some of those things made and I thought that if Subotsky made them it would actually be worse than if they were never made at all. I don't like to root for my things not to be made, but!"

The project progressed while

King was visiting the set of *FIRESTARTER*. De Laurentiis asked King if it might be possible to write something specifically for Drew Barrymore who was playing the title role in the film. De Laurentiis had some ideas about doing a film that would interrelate the [*Night Shift*] stories," King remembers. "I had an idea for a short story for some time that dealt with a little boy who is saved by his pet cat from a monster that lives in his wall. The cat would have a bad rep because the mother would think that cats steal breath and all that stuff. I don't know if I ever would have written it as a short story, but it was easy enough to turn into a short little screenplay. Just change the sex from boy to girl and the part fit Drew perfectly."

De Laurentiis not only liked the story, he liked the cat. It was the cat, he decided, that would be the linking device for the various stories. Since neither of the *Night Shift* stories had cats, King's initial reaction was: "the guy's got to be crazy. It's impossible."

What Dino wants, however, Dino gets. "I went back and thought about it and actually saw a way that it could be done," said King. "I got very excited about it and called him up. I said, 'Dino! Dino! I know how you can do this!' He said, 'Ees wounderful. Now, what about de goirl?' And I said, 'Dino! Do you know what you're asking?'"

In time, King fashioned a method for including the Drew Barrymore character in the connecting material as well. Despite the film's multi-story format, the linking device King used "actually ended up making *CAT'S EYE* a film that isn't a *CREEPSHOW*-type anthology at all," claims King. "It's actually a real movie."

Much is being made of the fact that *CAT'S EYE* isn't exactly a horror film, but a "humorous suspense thriller" in the words of unit publicist Steven Zeller. But Stephen King doesn't see the film as an attempt to do anything particularly different. After all, part of it is based on stories he wrote over a decade ago. "This time, there has been a conscious effort to look at the absurdities of the situations,"

KING'S EYE

An authors's-eye-view of scriptwriting, working for Dino De Laurentiis, and horror.

Your script for CUJO was uncredited. What happened there?

I thought my script was pretty good. It was not as faithful to the book as the final result was. It was submitted to the Screenwriter's Guild of America for screen credit by Taft International as "screenplay by Stephen King."

The woman who co-wrote the screenplay, Lauren Currier, lodged a protest and I got a letter from the Guild asking if I would like to respond to her protest for a split credit, or a three-way credit actually, since another writer, Don Carlos Dunaway, was also involved. A lot of my stuff was still in there, but I didn't want to fight about it. I let it go, and it was a split credit. At the time, I was in England, doing a promotional round for CHRISTINE.

What happened to your script for CHILDREN OF THE CORN?

Once again, the screenplay was submitted to the Screenwriter's Guild of America with my name on it and again there was a protest, this time by the fellow who got the screenwriting credit, George Goldsmith.

I thought about it a long, long time. New World Pictures was so hot to have my name on the screenplay! But on the other hand, I didn't need the screen credit. What happens if the picture's a dog and your name is on it and it's not supposed to be. You can't petition for a change after the picture's been out: in other words, I'm willing to take the credit if the reaction's good, and I won't if everybody says that this is a real piece of shit.

Another very moral question is, do you have any right, just because you're a big shot, to steal the screen credit from somebody who's an unknown. What if it's a great film? Essentially I decided I couldn't trust New World Pictures. I sent a telegram to the Screenwriter's Guild and said that I didn't want to respond to Goldsmith's petition to have sole screen credit on the picture.

So he was granted sole screen credit. I'm delighted that he was. The picture was a dog. New World tried to shuck-and-jive me. The screenplay that they sent me and represented as the final screenplay, had nothing in common at all with what finally made it to the screen.



Author Stephen King poses with the feline star of CAT'S EYE.

The copy of the screenplay that I saw had large pieces of my screenplay that I had done four or five years ago. I even recognized the typescript from the Olivetti that I used at the time. It was basically, I think, an effort on their part to fool me into accepting the screen credit that didn't belong to me.

CAT'S EYE features a monstrous little creature said to resemble the troll in your story "Three Billy Goats Gruff." Does that story have anything to do with "The General," on which the film is based?

It has everything to do with almost every monster story I've ever

written. I was thinkin' about this story last night before I went to sleep. You know, getting my feet under the sheet the way that I always do, so that nothing under the bed could get them. I decided that whether it's under the bed, or in the closet, or in the wall, it's all the same creature. I have written a long novel, not published yet, called *It*, that springs from that same myth. "Who's that trip-trapping on my bridge?" It's the scariest story I know.

CAT'S EYE is being promoted as a "humorous thriller," but CREEPSHOW was also funny to a

degree.

Dino has never seen CREEPSHOW. I asked him if he ever had. I can't really do Dino's accent but he came up to talk about CAT'S EYE and he said, "Stephen! De ting about dees stories, dey are horrible!" Then he kinda looked like he was gonna say something that was a little bit nasty or off-color, and remarked, "But ees funny. Ees funny!" And I said, "Oh." You know, like, "Gee, I never thought of that."

Well, they are hilarious. I saw part of the *Quitter's, Inc.* story, and I laughed harder than I've laughed at anything that I've seen in the theatres this year, with the exception of one serious picture, which I thought was pretty funny—STAR TREK III, I just laughed and laughed. I couldn't stop. 'Course I have a different reference. My brother went bald at eighteen, got Jesus at twenty-three, got Amway at thirty, and now he wears this wig and looks just like a sort of gone-to-seed William Shatner. I made that connection and just started to laugh.

Are you writing a script for PET SEMATARY?

Yea. I'm gonna write it, and I've written some of it, but there's no real hurry. I'm not charging ahead for a couple of reasons. One, I'm tired of screen work right now, and for another one, I think George Romero is gonna shoot DAY OF THE DEAD in Florida this fall.

You really championed THE EVIL DEAD.

I did (smiling).

That was grotesque, yet you pulled the well-known rats-in-the-mouth scene out of your own novel, "Salem's Lot." Why?

It was my second book and I was afraid that if I didn't give in they would just say, "Okay, that's it, we're not gonna publish this book." At a certain point that's every writer's fear. At the same time it can be a writer's salvation because editors can be right as well as wrong. My editor might've been right in that case. I'm not entirely convinced of it, but I do know that if *Salem's Lot* had been my seventh book instead of my second, and an editor had come along and said that, I could have, and probably would have said, "No, we're gonna keep that in." □

said King. "But there hasn't been any effort at all to play the material itself for laughs. Lewis isn't doing it."

Even so, it was the humorous aspect of the script that played a large part in attracting Lewis Teague to the project. "Hollywood regarded me as somebody who could only make brutally realistic dramas," said Teague. "I vowed that the next picture I was gonna do was gonna be light-hearted and fun and have a lot of fantasy in it. Dino sent me this script and I read it and just laughed my ass off. It was exactly the kind of film I was looking for."

In spite of the film's comic elements, CAT'S EYE has got a lot of teeth in it," said King. "Dino was the first person who consciously latched onto the idea that some of this stuff was funny, and even he said it in a 'What's Stephen King gonna do if I say this out loud' kinda tone. But Dino has never seen CREEPSHOW."

King is conscious of the fact that not everyone will see the humor in CAT'S EYE. "The funniest things in the film come from some really awful things that happen," he noted. "It's the kind of picture where if there weren't a ratings system and you were allowed to go as far as you legitimately could go, you would be laughing so hard you wouldn't notice that you just puked on your shoes."

King likens CAT'S EYE to GREMLINS in the film's juxtaposition of comedy and horror. "Kid's love GREMLINS, but I think a lot of adults are made uneasy by it because the ethics of it are so murky. I mean, it's like a Gahan Wilson Christmas card, isn't it really? And CAT'S EYE is like that. The ethics of this movie are very muddy to me."

Still, Stephen King enjoys giving people a good scare. It's clearly what he does best, and he sees CAT'S EYE as an opportunity to do it with a vengeance. "I would love to see them promote this as SATURDAY THE 14TH or this



A hairdryer and a Van de Graaff generator simulate an electric shock on Mary D'Arcy, in the Juice Room of "Quitters, Inc."

is a laugh riot. 'L-A-F-F, you know, 'laff riot,' because then we'd get a lot of people in there, particularly young children and unprepared older people and scare them until they wet their pants or have heart attacks, or whatever, because it's a pretty scary picture."

To help provide the scares, CAT'S EYE brings together a number of noted special effects artists who are responsible for making the script's fantasies into apparent realities on film. Jeff Jarvis, who has worked on POLTERGEIST and recently on FIRESTARTER, is responsible for all of the film's mechanical effects. Among the illusions Jarvis has been called on to create are flying monsters and computer-age torture chambers. Jarvis also plays a large part in executing "The Ledge" sequence, making it possible for Robert Hays to appear to be walking a six-inch ledge some thirty-five stories above the ground.

Carlo Rambaldi worked on "The General" sequence, design-

ing and building the monster that terrorizes the little girl played by Drew Barrymore. CAT'S EYE also makes use of a great deal of miniature and oversized sets and a variety of trained cats provided by Karl Miller who trained the Saint Bernard for CUJO.

Press releases for the film describe Rambaldi's creature as resembling "the troll in the children's story 'Three Billy Goats Gruff.'" Rambaldi constructed an articulated head for the creature that will be worn by one of three midget actors in costume. The design follows the same basic principle as the design used for ET, which Rambaldi also created.

"There's a lot of things we're doing," said Jarvis about the effects. "We're working in conjunction with Rambaldi. He developed the creature, the troll, and the rest of it falls in our lap." A number of the effects sequences in CAT'S EYE are very physical, even if considerably less explosive than those in FIRESTARTER, and Jarvis and his crew have taken every precaution to see that safety is the by-word.

Director Lewis Teague is happy to be working on another Stephen King film. "It's a chance to go back and do things right," he said. "The main difference is that I've had a chance to work on the material with Stephen King this time. That's been really satisfying." The King-Teague collaboration has led to numerous in-jokes that King fans will discover popping up throughout the film.

For King, CAT'S EYE is something of a new beginning in terms of films bearing his name. "Everything else that I've done includes a divorce clause, a no-fault divorce clause. If Dino comes back to me, or the director comes back to me and says, 'Gee, we like this, but we want to set it in outer space,' or 'We like

this, but what would you think about changing the part of the werewolf so that we can have her played by Meryl Streep' or something like that, I'll have nothing to do with it.

"That's not a bad idea," King remarked, suddenly caught up with the idea of Meryl Streep transforming into a she-wolf under the light of a full moon.

"But I like the people I'm working with," King continued. "Lewis Teague is a great director. I like what I've seen."

And Dino De Laurentiis clearly likes what he's seen. Production is already underway on the producer's fourth Stephen King project, an adaptation of *Cycle of the Werewolf* called SILVER BULLET (see page 12), previewed elsewhere in this issue. □

Robert Hays swings from the ledge of a high-rise penthouse in the segment based on King's story "The Ledge."



Director Lewis Teague (center) and James Woods (left), filming the "Quitters, Inc." segment of CAT'S EYE, based on King's macabre look at kicking the smoking habit.



COMING

SILVER BULLET

Stephen King tale pits werewolf against wheelchair hotrodder.

By Tim Hewitt

There's a werewolf on the prowl in "Tarker's Mills," and in the countryside around Burgaw, at least when the movie crew is in town and the cameras are rolling. Dino De Laurentiis and his North Carolina Film Corporation have transformed a small town in the Tar Heel State into the setting for the newest Stephen King film, SILVER BULLET.

This film marks King's third outing as a screenwriter, once again adapting one of his own stories for the screen. This time out the source material is a limited edition story called *Cycle of the Werewolf*. Published in 1983 by Christopher Zavis's Land of Enchantment imprint and illustrated by popular comic artist Berni Wrightson, the book went out of print almost immediately.

Cycle of the Werewolf is the story of a town that finds itself plagued by a werewolf for twelve months. Each section of the book is devoted to a single monthly episode, often taking place on a recognizable holiday, such as Valentine's Day, the Fourth of July, and of course, Halloween.

The book began as a calendar project in 1979, but grew as King worked on it until it became a short story. When King speaks of the book, there is a detectable note of dissatisfaction in his voice, which changes noticeably

when he speaks of the film.

"It was a chance to do what should have been done with it," he said of his screenplay based on the story. "That is, take this character, the little boy in the wheelchair, who I discovered about half-way through the project, and use him as the unifying character to turn it into, in this case a movie, but what would have been a novel if I had ever fleshed it out."

Gary Busey, a newcomer to genre films, stars as Uncle Red, the understanding adult who believes his wheelchair bound nephew Marty, played by Corey Haim, who says the killer is a werewolf. Megan Follows, a well-known young actress in her native Canada plays Jane, and Everett McGill is Reverend Lowe, the preacher with a darker nature than the one known to his flock. McGill had the lead in *QUEST FOR FIRE*, and more recently appeared as Stilgar in David Lynch's *DUNE*.

Making his feature directorial debut is Daniel Attias, whose credits as assistant director include such films as *E.T.*, *ONE FROM THE HEART*, and *HAMMETT*. Attias can count himself in the company of Spielberg, Coppola, and Wim Wenders with his first feature.

As a student of the UCLA Film School in 1982, Attias made *LEON'S CASE*, a short currently showing on PBS stations. It was largely on the



Corey Haim stars as Marty Coslaw, a 13 year-old boy handicapped and confined to a souped-up wheelchair called the "Silver Bullet," (inset, being set-up).



strength of that film that Dino De Laurentiis offered him the chance to direct *SILVER BULLET*. Attias has a refreshing approach to the material in light of some of the B-movie clichés inherent in the subject.

"I'm telling a story about a little boy," said Attias. "This story is in one sense as a lesson on the meaning of being *crippled*—it's not simply Marty's confinement to a wheelchair. You can see the other characters in terms of being crippled, which really has to do with one's self-image."

Attias has had considerable input regarding the story and is quite open

in his praise for King as a collaborator. "I have been surprised at how willing he's been to listen to ideas and try to incorporate them into his concept of the story," said the director. "When you're dealing with a writer as successful and as talented as King it comes as something of a surprise to find such an open mind and a recognition that the film is necessarily a collaboration. I've been very pleased at Stephen's willingness to work on some of the concerns that I bring to this project."

SILVER BULLET is being produced by Martha Schumacher, who produced *CAT'S EYE*, the previous King project from Dino De Laurentiis. Carlo Rambaldi has designed the werewolf for the film which will include what may well be the largest single gathering of werewolves in motion picture history. Joseph P. Mercurio, whose credits include *AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN*, *48 HRS.*, and *AGAINST ALL ODDS*, is special effects coordinator and Michael McCracken, Sr. will supervise make-up effects.

Production has continued at a steady pace for the film despite some reported minor problems with an early werewolf design and protests from a North Carolina religious group who opposed the use of public property for the filming of *SILVER BULLET*. The Faith Christian Fellowship cited the film for containing "murder, violence, evil representations, and vulgar language" as cause for opposition. Even so, a local church allowed the production crew to use their chapel as a location.

SILVER BULLET will be ready for release in late summer of 1985, coming in almost direct competition with *A COMPANY OF WOLVES*, and *THE HOWLING II*. In the film industry, it appears that (were)wolves always travel in packs. □

THE FLY: BROOKSFILM REMAKES FOR \$9 MILLION

A \$9 million remake of the 1958 horror film *THE FLY*, is currently in preproduction with two months of filming scheduled to begin in May in London. *THE FLY* is being produced by Stuart Cornfeld and Mel Brooks (who shared similar duties on *THE ELEPHANT MAN*) for 20th Century-Fox (the company that produced the original), and will be directed by newcomer Robert Bierman, with make-up effects by Chris Tucker.

"I had been looking for a number of years for something that would make a really scary movie," said Cornfeld. "One day screenwriter Chuck Pogue came to me with this really great idea." The screenplay for the remake is by Pogue and Walon Green (whose previous credits include *SORCERER* and *THE WILD BUNCH*).

"This is not going to be the same story as the original film," said Bierman, whose long list of work in England includes television and documentaries. "This version will

be more frightening; the central theme of the scientist having to deal with his problems with the fly is still there but we've made quite a few changes in the rest of the story."

While Cornfeld claims that this version of *THE FLY* will not be "special effects crazy" (although he recently described such graphic scenes as the birth of a deformed baby and a person's body falling apart), he is certain that "what effects there are will be much differ-

Vincent Price in RETURN OF THE FLY.



ent and better than those used in the original film."

The original was directed by Kurt Neumann from a screenplay by James Clavell (who went on to write a number of best selling novels including *Shogun*), and was a straightforward tale of a scientist's unsuccessful and horrifying experiments with the teleportation of matter. The film, which starred Vincent Price and David Hedison, was modestly budgeted (\$350,000) but survived the critical lambasting accorded most B-films of that era, and went on to become both a critical and financial success, spawning two sequels, *RETURN OF THE FLY* (1959) and *CURSE OF THE FLY* (1965).

Cornfeld says that the possibility of having Hedison or Price appear in the remake has been discussed and is being considered. "But we don't want to put ourselves in the position of stopping the progress of the film and saying okay, here's your cameo." **Marc Shapiro**

**LUCASFILM LAWSUIT:
JUDGE RULES A HOAX**

California artist Lee Seiler's lawsuit against Lucasfilm, charging that the Walkers seen in *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK* were stolen from his designs, has been ruled a hoax in the U.S. district court for Northern California by judge William H. Orrick.

The ruling came in a written opinion rendered in October after seven days of pretrial evidentiary hearings. The judge ruled that Seiler had "... testified falsely... purposefully destroyed or withheld [some evidence]" and "... fabricated and misrepresented [other evidence]." The judge denied as evidence copies of Seiler's Walker designs (see "Battle of the Walkers," 14:4/14:5:11), the key to Seiler's case.

Seiler's suit against Lucasfilm, filed in 1983, claimed that the designs were published and sold in 1976 and 1977, and were subsequently misappropriated by Lucasfilm. In court however, Seiler was unable to produce any record of orders or correspondence that referred to the designs prior to the movie's release. Furthermore, a survey of over 2,500 names from Seiler's mailing list failed to produce anyone who had ever possessed or seen a copy of Seiler's designs before the film.

Seiler claimed to have sold the designs at the San Jose Fantasy Symposium in 1979, a convention at which attorneys for Seiler had hoped to show access by Lucasfilm effects technician Dennis Muren. Photos of Seiler's booth at the convention showed no evidence of the designs however, a fact substantiated by the testimony of four independent witnesses.

The judge accused Seiler of fabricating much of his evidence, including a videotape purportedly made in 1978, and other evidence produced by Seiler's former partner Mitch Ikuta, who was to receive a 4% interest in any proceeds from the suit.

Most damaging to Seiler was his inability to produce the original drawings of the designs at issue, or satisfactorily explain their destruction or loss. The judge termed Seiler's story about loss in a flood as "inherently unbelievable and disturbingly contradictory."

Lucasfilm is expected to file a motion for summary judgment, to have the case dismissed without trial. Seiler's attorneys, the San Francisco law firm of Bronson, Bronson and McKinnon, who took the case on a contingency basis, are seeking a jury trial. □

THE STUFF

Horror specialist Larry Cohen unleashes a killer dessert, for laughs.

By Dan Scapperotti

The low budget science fiction and horror film arena abounds with producers and directors who enter the field, churn out a couple of modest efforts and then disappear into the Hollywood woodwork. Larry Cohen is an exception. Acting as producer and director of his own scripts, Cohen has managed, over the last twelve years, to generate a small but impressive canon of fantasy films with off-beat themes ranging from the monster babies of *IT'S ALIVE* (1973) to the prehistoric Aztec god of *Q* (1982) to his latest, killer ice cream. Cohen was recently in Gotham shooting scenes for his new picture, *THE STUFF*, a horror comedy about a dessert food that consumes the customer, which New World Pictures will release in July.

In *THE STUFF*, Cohen targets product marketing, the self destructive nature of the consumer and the irresponsibility of industries that put profits above the health of their clients. "People are unwilling to believe that something is harmful for them and they continue to use it even when they know it's going to kill them," said Cohen, referring to the surgeon general's warnings printed on such high volume items as cigarettes and diet soft drinks.

The Stuff is a delicious new dessert which has swept the consumer public off their collective feet and in so doing poses a threat to competing products. The dairy industry, seeing the line on their marketing charts take a nose dive, hire industrial spy David Moe Rutherford, played by Michael Moriarty, to infiltrate the company and learn the secret of *The Stuff*. Moriarty gave a bravura performance as the heroic cheap crook in Cohen's *Q*. The Dairy Masters aren't the only ones with a keen interest in the product. The Japanese are also anxious to get their hands on the formula and Chocolate Chip Charlie (Garrett Morris), who has had his own cookie company and chain of stores pulled out from under him by *The Stuff*, wants to know just who put him out of business.

Also appearing in the film is Andrea Marcovici, who played Peter Strauss' android assistant, Chalmers, in *SPACEHUNTER*. Marcovici plays Nicole Kendall, a Madison Avenue marketing genius who creates the successful ad campaign that propels *The Stuff* to the top of the sales charts. When Moriarty and Morris team up and learn the horrible secret of the dessert their shady backgrounds cloud the issue. Since Moriarty was hired by the dairymen to discredit *The Stuff*, consumer groups discount his warnings.

In desperation, Moriarty and Morris enlist the aid of Colonel Spears (Paul Sorvino), a right wing fanatic who is told that the Communists are



Michael Moriarty as the industrial spy hired to find out about *THE STUFF*.

behind the threat and are trying to poison America. "This is a story about how people develop, how they change," said Cohen. "The protagonists are amoral people at the beginning who ban together to try and do something heroic. Moriarty says to Sorvino at one point, 'Maybe, if we pull this off we can be a couple of heroes instead of a couple of assholes.'"

Most of *THE STUFF* is being shot in suburban New York and New Jersey using existing sites which, according to the producer, have perfectly realized the buildings and areas he envisioned in his script. When filming began last August the moviemakers descended on the small town of Kingston, New York where the local radio station and the Long Horn Diner became focal points for the film's action. New Jersey wasn't spared the onslaught either. A Shoprite store in Emerson served as the supermarket in which a youngster smashes a display of *The Stuff*. A Jersey City hospital had a section turned into a juvenile detention center where the boy is taken after his outburst.

Cohen and his crew spent several days in New York City, shooting scenes where Moriarty meets Marcovici. The filmmaker rented a suite in the Sherry Netherland Hotel on Fifth Avenue overlooking Central Park to film the love scene between the spy and the marketing expert.

During shooting the small rooms are crowded with cast and technicians and a camera crew from Entertainment Tonight is on hand to tape a segment for that show. In the midst of this frenetic scene, Larry Cohen sits on the couch with a dentist at his elbow replacing a lost filling, while Michael Moriarty clowns with a Garrett Morris effects dummy. Andrea Marcovici picks that moment to walk in wearing a camisole and a thin robe and exclaims, "If my mother saw me now she'd wonder what kind of

movie I was making."

But *THE STUFF* is not to be taken lightly. As Cohen explained, "When you've eaten enough of this stuff it starts to take you over and then strange changes occur." The end product of this metamorphosis will be visualized in part with miniature work by Dave Allen whom Cohen used to breathe life into his flying serpent in *Q*. The blob-like effects will take about five months to complete.

Rounding out the effects work is Steve Neill whose credits include *THE THING*, and last summer's *GHOSTBUSTERS*, for which Neill designed the terror dogs and the chair that sprouts arms that clutch Sigourney Weaver. Neill will handle the special makeup effects for *THE STUFF* that include an array of false bodies and false heads.

"Neill designed four different Garrett Morris bodies," revealed Cohen. "Each one does something different. It totally opens up and goes into a change; you turn into a monster and then it starts eating you."

One of these dummies sits on a coffee table in the hotel suite, a disquieting likeness of the actor with his mouth gapping unnaturally open. Stacked in front of the dummy is a pyramid of purple, pink, and brown *stuff* containers resembling a prominent ice cream brand. Six tubes lead from the model onto a control board that allows the operator to move the forehead, eyebrows, mouth and eyes of the dummy producing an unsettling effect. So detailed is the model that even a close inspection doesn't readily belie the fact that the torso isn't human.

A man who likes to exercise total control over his work, Cohen finds disturbing the increased need for special effects in his films. "Movies are moving more and more toward what the old Disney studio was like," he said. "There the actors were not important because it was all animated. In science fiction films today the actors are just background for the puppets and special effects." □

Moriarty and Andrea Marcovici with an effects dummy of costar Garrett Morris.



COCOON

Ron Howard follows *SPLASH* with a gentle fantasy about age and the fountain of youth.

By Charlotte Wolter

Ron Howard has decided that it's safe to go back in the water. On location in the beach resort of St. Petersburg, Florida, directing Zanuck/Brown's production of *COCOON* for 20th Century-Fox, Howard doesn't seem concerned that he's getting his feet wet for the second film in a row, with *COCOON* following closely on the heels of his 1984 hit *SPLASH*.

But the heartwarming fantasy of *COCOON* promises to be quite a different challenge for the director. Set in the sun-washed geriatric idyll of St. Petersburg, *COCOON* is about a group of senior citizens living in discontented boredom in a retirement center. Their few pleasures include such innocuous mischief as sneaking over the fence of the deserted mansion next door for a forbidden swim in its lovely pool.

Even this simple amusement is denied them when the mansion is rented by mysterious strangers, in reality a group of alien visitors. The aliens are here to revive some of their kind stored in cocoon-like pods on the ocean floor. As part of the process, they convert the elders' beloved pool into a rejuvenation bath.

When some of the seniors sneak in for one more swim, they find themselves suddenly youthful and vigorous, greatly complicating their lives and relationships with each other. In the end, they must choose whether to remain on Earth to suffer the fate of all living things, or join the nearly immortal aliens in space.

Howard is even more soft-spoken and sensitive than his on-camera persona, qualities which producer Lili Zanuck thought perfect for *COCOON*'s gentle tone. "We wanted Ron because he could infuse both the aliens and the seniors with a lot of heart," Zanuck said emphatically. Her husband, Oscar-winning producer Richard Zanuck (*THE STING*, *JAWS*) agreed, noting, "A lot of top directors are afraid to show emotion.

Ron Howard goes over the script with stars Maureen Stapleton, Don Ameche, Hume Cronyn and Gwen Verdon.



He has a very sensitive touch."

The Zanucks were equally impressed with Howard's faith in the whimsy of *COCOON*'s material. "I think fantasy works well, if you try to make it as believable and honest as possible," Howard said earnestly. "You can say so much through fantasy that would be flat if you tried any other way."

Despite his quiet ways, Howard seemed firmly in charge of the production, which has breezed through an extensive outdoor shooting schedule during Florida's hurricane season with minimal problems. No doubt adding to Howard's confidence is the fact that he is working with such familiar associates as production designer Jack Collis and film editors Dan Handley and Michael Hill from *NIGHT SHIFT* and *SPLASH* as well as director of photography Don Peterson who lensed *SPLASH* for Howard.

COCOON has already gained attention for its extraordinary cast of older actors, like an elder *BIG CHILL*, assembled to portray the residents of the senior retirement center. Before they had signed Howard, the producers got commitments from American stage legends Jessica Tandy, Hume Cronin and Maureen Stapleton.

Assembling the rest of the cast was a special treat for the Zanucks and Howard. "We must have seen 200 people, anyone you have ever loved in an old movie," Lili Zanuck recalled fondly. "Sometimes," she confessed, "we would see people Ron and I always wanted to meet, knowing they wouldn't be right for the movie." Their final choices include such highly respected performers as Don Ameche, Gwen Verdon, Wilford Brimley, and Jack Guilford.

The seniors are assisted by a young fishing boat captain played by Steve Guttenberg. Brian Denehy plays the alien leader, with assistance from two movie star progeny, Tyrone Power, Jr. and Tahnee Welch, who becomes Guttenberg's love interest.

COCOON was an unpublished novel by David Saperstein which caught the eye of Lili Zanuck four years ago when she was looking for a property suitable for her producing debut. The book is scheduled to be published this year, to coincide with the film's release, July 19.

Despite the producers' emphasis on the human side of the story, *COCOON* promises to deliver spectacular effects, although details are a closely-guarded secret. The film features makeups by Greg Cannom and visual effects by ILM, supervised by Ken Ralston.

"This is a picture about human beings," said Richard Zanuck, downplaying the effects. "If it works on that human level, then all the special effects will be an added bonus." □

BOXOFFICE SURVEY: 1984 RECAP

An analysis of the 50 top-grossing films as reported each week by *Variety*, reveals that horror, fantasy, and science fiction films accounted for 39.6% of all film earnings in 1984, a little ahead of 1983's 38.4% indicating that the genre is as healthy as ever.

GHOSTBUSTERS was 1984's top-grossing genre film, also ranked number one among all films at the boxoffice, as was 1983's *RETURN OF THE JEDI*, and 1982's *E.T.* The next two biggest genre money makers of 1984 were ranked number two and three among films in general.

Top-grossing genre films of 1984 in the *Variety* totals are listed at right. Titles are indicated as horror (h), fantasy (f) and science fiction (sf), followed by the number of weeks in 1984 that each title made it into the Top 50 list. Please note that the dollar figures listed represent only a sample of a film's total earnings (averaging one fourth of a film's domestic gross).

Of the 415 titles that comprised the weekly listings, 120 or 28.9% were genre titles. Breakdown by genre is as follows: 35 fantasy films, accounting for 8.4% of the total and a whopping 22% of the receipts, 30 science fiction films, 7.2% of the total, and a meager 8.2% of receipts, and 55 horror films, 13.3% of the total, but only 4.3% of the receipts.

Compared to 1983, science fiction dropped a huge 52.6% in total revenue, and horror fell by 28.4%. Fantasy grosses, however, balanced out the genre, skyrocketing 307.4% over last year.

In breakdown by distributor (below), Paramount, with eleven films grabbed more than 22% of the genre film business, quite a reversal of the \$13 million-plus earned in 1983. Conversely, last year's front-runner, 20th Century-Fox, which garnered over \$76 million with *RETURN OF THE JEDI* fell to tenth place. □

TOP TEN MONEY MAKERS

<i>GHOSTBUSTERS</i> (Col, f, 30)	\$59,552,468
<i>INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM</i> (Par, f, 23)	\$52,146,870
<i>GREMLINS</i> (WB, f, 22)	\$41,367,950
<i>STAR TREK III: THE SEARCH FOR SPOCK</i> (Par, sf, 12)	\$19,177,819
<i>SPLASH</i> (BV, f, 19)	\$18,572,521
<i>GREYSTOKE—THE LEGEND OF TARZAN</i> (WB, f, 14)	\$12,587,204
<i>THE TERMINATOR</i> (Orion, sf, 10)	\$12,345,353
<i>ALL OF ME</i> (Univ, f, 12)	\$10,079,884
<i>FRIDAY THE 13TH—THE FINAL CHAPTER</i> (Par, h, 8)	\$ 8,339,871
<i>RED DAWN</i> (MGM/UA, sf, 8)	\$ 7,644,669

OTHER TOP EARNERS

<i>ANGEL</i> (NW, h, 12)	\$5,567,890
<i>BODY DOUBLE</i> (Col, h, 8)	\$3,671,997
<i>THE BROTHER FROM ANOTHER PLANET</i> (Cine, sf, 16)	\$1,236,858
<i>CHILDREN OF THE CORN</i> (NW, h, 11)	\$4,575,910
<i>CHRISTINE</i> (Col, h, 6)	\$2,297,080
<i>C.H.U.D.</i> (NW, h, 9)	\$2,370,855
<i>CLOAK AND DAGGER</i> (Univ, f, 5)	\$2,342,532
<i>CONAN THE DESTROYER</i> (Univ, f, 7)	\$6,937,383
<i>DEATHSTALKER</i> (NW, h, 11)	\$1,043,633
<i>DREAMSCAPE</i> (Fox, sf, 8)	\$3,851,437
<i>DUNE</i> (Univ, sf, 3)	\$5,792,377
<i>FIRESTARTER</i> (Univ, sf, 5)	\$4,450,421
<i>ICEMAN</i> (Univ, sf, 6)	\$2,288,441
<i>ICE PIRATES</i> (MGM/UA, sf, 4)	\$2,632,871
<i>IMPULSE</i> (Fox, h, 5)	\$1,275,735
<i>JUNGLE BOOK</i> (BV, f, 7)	\$3,436,475
<i>THE MUPPETS TAKE MANHATTAN</i> (TS, f, 9)	\$6,937,383
<i>THE NEVERENDING STORY</i> (WB, f, 9)	\$5,262,873
<i>A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET</i> (NLC, h, 8)	\$5,143,151
<i>NIGHT OF THE COMET</i> (AR, sf, 4)	\$2,989,950
<i>NINJA III—THE DOMINATION</i> (Can, h, 7)	\$2,485,884
<i>OH GOD, YOU DEVIL!</i> (WB, f, 7)	\$6,102,137
<i>THE PHILADELPHIA EXPERIMENT</i> (NW, sf, 7)	\$2,041,797
<i>PINOCCHIO</i> (BV, f, 2)	\$3,281,364
<i>REPO MAN</i> (Univ, sf, 29)	\$1,358,919
<i>THE RESCUERS</i> (BV, f, 5)	\$1,766,072
<i>SHEENA</i> (Col, f, 4)	\$1,773,731
<i>SILENT NIGHT, DEADLY NIGHT</i> (TS, h, 4)	\$1,931,450
<i>SMURFS AND THE MAGIC FLUTE</i> (AR, f, 7)	\$1,173,494
<i>STARMAN</i> (Col, sf, 3)	\$4,184,991
<i>STREETS OF FIRE</i> (Univ, f, 7)	\$1,838,111
<i>SUPERGIRL</i> (TS, sf, 6)	\$4,245,116
<i>TERROR IN THE AISLES</i> (Univ, h, 4)	\$2,983,359
<i>TOP SECRET</i> (Par, f, 9)	\$5,381,136
<i>TWO OF A KIND</i> (Fox, f, 6)	\$2,715,328
<i>2010</i> (MGM/UA, sf, 4)	\$7,823,944

GENRE FILM REVENUE BY DISTRIBUTOR

Distributor	# of Films	Earnings	% of Total
Paramount (Para)	11	\$85,658,680	22.1%
Columbia (Col)	5	\$71,480,267	18.5%
Warner Bros. (WB)	8	\$65,655,614	17.0%
Universal (Univ)	12	\$43,181,076	11.2%
Buena Vista/Disney (BV)	7	\$28,006,102	7.2%
MGM/UA	4	\$18,533,516	4.8%
New World (NW)	8	\$15,827,585	4.1%
Tri-Star (TS)	4	\$13,984,273	3.6%
Orion	3	\$12,419,353	3.2%
20th Century-Fox (Fox)	6	\$10,384,333	2.7%
New Line Cinema (NLC)	5	\$ 5,918,318	1.5%
Atlantic Releasing (AR)	3	\$ 4,215,444	1.1%
Cannon (Can)	4	\$ 2,651,995	.7%
Cinecom (Cine)	2	\$ 1,846,274	.5%
Film Ventures (FV)	5	\$ 1,196,988	.3%
All Others	33	\$ 6,016,116	1.6%

• Indicates a film originally released before 1984

THE TITAN FIND

**A low-budget, independent,
ALIEN-inspired monster story,
set on the moon of Saturn.**

By Michael Mayo

Even though in space, nobody can hear you scream Bill Malone still wants you to try. The 37 year-old director of SCARED TO DEATH is getting ready to try and scare audiences again with his second feature, THE TITAN FIND. The \$4.2 million production is set to open this spring, and Malone is cautiously optimistic about its chances.

The film is set in the near future, when the commercialization of space is well under way. On the surface of Titan, a research ship has discovered the remains of an ancient alien laboratory and its collection of specimens. One specimen, however, turns out to be much livelier than originally thought, and kills all but one of the crew. The survivor lives long enough to make it back to Earth, setting off a race between two competing multinational firms for whatever is there, both unaware of just how deadly the alien is.

Despite its small budget, the film boasts good production values, with set design by Robert Skotak

and effects by the L.A. Effects Group, and stars international weirdo Klaus Kinski as a German space commander.

Malone, a baby-faced man who resembles DREAMSCAPE's villain David Patrick Kelley, explained the roundabout way THE TITAN FIND got off the ground. "After I did SCARED TO DEATH, I was trying to get another project going," said Malone. "One of the people my producer Bill Dunn and I went to see said they'd really like to make a picture like SCARED TO DEATH. They signed us up to do one of our projects, MURDER IN THE 21ST CENTURY, a detective story. After we did the screenplay, they didn't think it had enough exploitation value. 'What else do you have,' they asked, 'and can you have it to us by tomorrow morning?' This was in January, 1984.

"On that short a notice, all I could do was go through my files and see what I had kicking around. I found a two page story synopsis of THE TITAN FIND which I had written six or seven years earlier, and I took that in to them. It was basically just the beginning of the



American astronaut Diane Salinger enters the crashed German ship on Titan.

picture as it is now. I read it to them with some background tapes of classical music and they loved it. I said to myself, 'Great... now how do I make a film out of this?'"

Not only was *how* a problem, but *where* as well. With a tight budget and little lead time given the company, it would have been nearly impossible to get studio space to shoot the film. The production's answer was to create its own studio, setting up shop in an abandoned industrial plant in Burbank. The small warehouse became a tight maze of different bits of spaceship interiors and planet exteriors, with Malone's crew shooting on one set, while another was torn down behind them and another built just ahead of them. Filming began

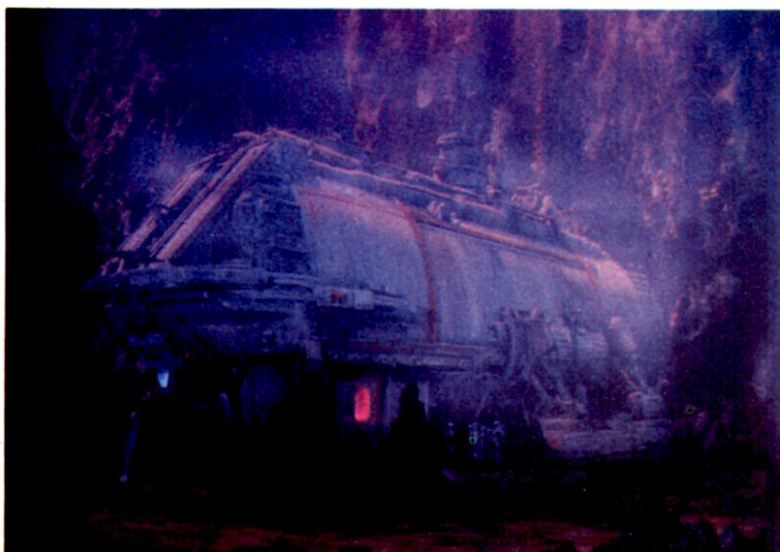
June 25th.

"We've been on it now for 8½ weeks, and I'm tired," said Malone. "This has been a particularly tough picture because everything's got smoke and dust and lava rock, which not only creates a lot of noise when you step on it, but makes this gritty dust and gets into everything. We're forever wearing filter masks. Initially it sounded like a good idea doing everything in one location where you wouldn't have to be moving people around, but after a while, all you want to do is go outside and see some sun."

Malone is taking a lot of liberties with the Titan setting. "Well, I figure it will be a long time before anybody gets there to find out what it is

continued on page 55

Left: The American ship Shenendoah, crashed beneath the surface of Titan. Right: The crew of the Shenandoah locates the German ship Richter Dynamics, inside a crater.



P.P.—THE PLANETARY PAL

What would really happen when a helpless ExtraTerrestrial winds-up in the clutches of an American brat?

By James Van Hise

"This is *not* a ripoff of E.T.," insists filmmaker Paul Sammon. "A parody acknowledges its source material whereas a ripoff does not." Sammon has made a number of short films, including *DESTINATION DUNE*, a featurette on the David Lynch film, made for Universal, which premiered at the 1983 World Science Fiction Convention in Baltimore.

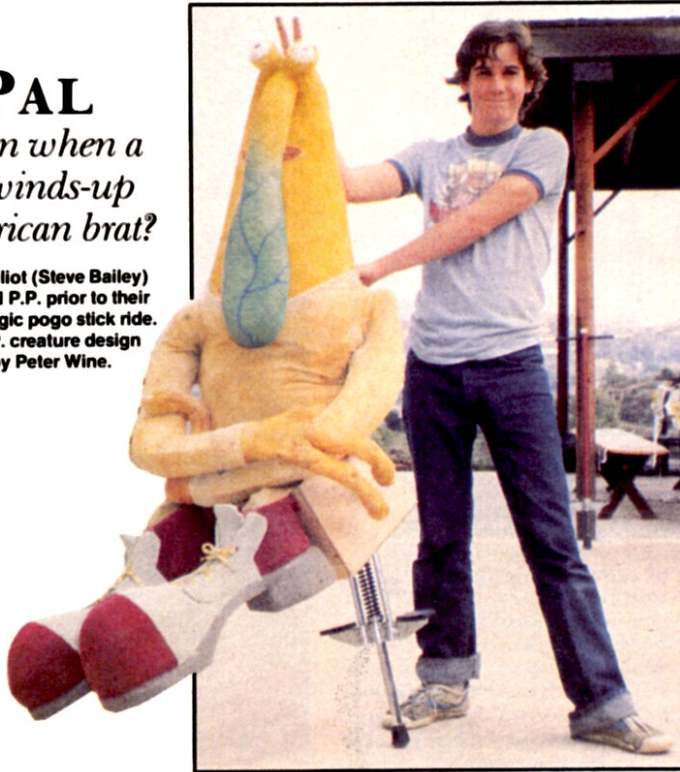
Initially, P.P.—THE PLANETARY PAL began life as a ten minute short. "But just like inflation, it grew," said Sammon. The film's final running time will be close to 90 minutes when editing is completed. Sammon formed his own company, modestly dubbed Awesome Productions, to make the film, done between stints at Universal as film publicist on *CONAN* and *DUNE*.

Working out of a rented storefront in a San Diego shopping mall called Glasshouse Square, Sammon assembled a local crew (at one point over 25 people were involved on the project) and personally oversaw every phase of the production, including pitching in to help build props.

A full-scale spaceship interior 25 feet high and 18 feet across was erected for a weekend's shooting in the dead of winter in the Laguna Mountains. These picturesque, snow-covered peaks are about an hour east of San Diego at an elevation of 6000 feet. During the shoot a film cartridge froze in-camera, requiring re-shooting six months later.

P.P. begins when an alien ship carrying representatives of Cozmo Beer, "the cheapest beer in the galaxy," lands on earth and accidentally leaves

Helliott (Steve Bailey) and P.P. prior to their magic pogo stick ride. P.P. creature design is by Peter Wine.



one of its crew behind when the creature wanders off to take a leak. The story then reveals what would happen if a stranded alien met a *real* teenage boy or, in Sammon's words, "an all-American, sadistic little shit."

Casting for P.P. was done in San Diego, where an open casting call printed in a local paper produced over two hundred hopefuls for the two-day audition period. The lead role of Helliott, P.P.'s torturer, was ultimately given to local child actor Steve Bailey; the remainder of the human cast (three other creatures are featured, as well as the title alien) includes Nanci Hunter as Mom, Sally Marsh as Dead Little Kathy, Tony Marcus as Knees, and Sammon as Mr. Pescado—a bit part.

The P.P. crew includes co-pro-

ducer Sherri Sires, who not only conceived the film's title and basic plot-line but is given screen credit for story as well. Other P.P. technical members are Michael Stuart, who both played the titled alien and served as the film's head of special effects (Stuart previously produced and directed a San Diego-based science fiction short titled "Budget Cut") and Jerry Sykes, the film's director of photography (who worked on such genre fare as *CHILDREN OF THE CORN*, *MAN-IAC*, and *THE EXTERMINATOR*). Rounding things out were production designer Larry Ortiz, creature designer Peter Wine, and modelmakers Jim Dore and Dave Goldberg.

Sammon used his own money for financing, with additional support from a few private investors. The film's special effects include cel-animation, stop-motion, and miniature photography, and a one-tenth scale multi-functional model of the "spore buddy," the cozmoids' huge mushroom-shaped spacecraft. A larger-scale section of the "spore buddy" was built which ejects a "drink Cozmo Beer" billboard. Also constructed was a 12x12 foot fully-detailed miniature forest in which the "spore buddy" lands.

Sammon's slideshow preview of the P.P. filming in progress was warmly and enthusiastically received last September at the World Science Fiction Convention, held in Los Angeles. The film will have its world premier at a local San Diego theatre before the summer of 1985. After that, Sammon and crew hope to sell the film to a major cable network. "And by the way," Sammon concludes, "there's one thing I can guarantee about P.P.—he's *funny!*" □

SHERLOCK, JR.: SPIELBERG VERY BUSY

Production has begun in London on *YOUNG SHERLOCK HOLMES*, one of three projects producer Steven Spielberg currently has underway. Also filming is *GOONIES* (see page 19) for Warner Bros and *BACK TO THE FUTURE*, directed by Robert Zemeckis, for Universal. Spielberg exec produces with Frank Marshall and Kathleen Kennedy.

Paramount backs *YOUNG SHERLOCK HOLMES*, which is directed by Barry Levinson from a screenplay by *GREMLINS* writer Chris Columbus. Levinson directed *DINER* (1982), a critically acclaimed '50's character study, and *THE NATURAL* (1984), the mythic telling of a sports legend.

Production designer Norman Reynolds is constructing Victorian London on the backlot of EMI studios for the period piece, a pairing of Holmes with his later erstwhile collaborator Dr. Watson, as teenagers. According to the original Conan Doyle stories, the two never met until later in life.

Story involves the construction of a flying machine by the pair, used to soar over London in pursuit of an arch criminal. Special effects are the work of ILM, including a hallucinogenic sequence in which inanimate objects come to life—via stop-motion animation and mechanical effects—to plague one of the main characters.

LABYRINTH: LUCAS JOINS HENSON

George Lucas and Jim Henson have joined forces to film *LABYRINTH*. Production begins in April at EMI Studios in London, with Henson directing. Lucas will serve as executive producer for release by Tri-Star.

Henson has abandoned a script by Monty Python alumnus Terry Jones, and is reportedly scrapping much of the film's humor in the process. Story involves the quest of a young girl whose little brother has been abducted by Goblins. The girl must go through a maze, the labyrinth of the title, to get to Goblin-land and bring him back. On the way she is accompanied by three *WIZARD OF OZ*-like sidekicks, fantasy characters to be created by Henson's Creature Shop and designed by Brian Froud.

Film is a joint venture between Lucas and Henson, financed entirely by Tri-Star. In addition to exec producing, Lucas is providing post-production facilities and special effects by ILM.

The Spore Buddy, designed by Michael Stuart and Larry Ortiz, on a table-top set.



THE HOWLING—II

Christopher Lee, the King of horror, joins Sybil Danning, the Queen of exploitation.

By Alan Jones

A sinister cult with its base in Transylvania. An evil witch who transforms her ageing body into that of svelte Sybil Danning. A young man seeking revenge on the killers responsible for the mysterious death of his sister. And Christopher Lee as an expert on the occult whose destiny lies in the *dark country*.

No, Hammer and A.I.P. aren't back in action—these are a few of the ingredients promised by Parisien born director Phillippe Mora when his latest fantasy film reaches the screen later this year. It is the much anticipated sequel to Joe Dante's popular low budget hit, *THE HOWLING*. But it won't be called *THE HOWLING II* as the pre-publicity would have us believe. "It will be something along the lines of *APOCALYPSE WEREWOLF: THE HOWLING RIDES AGAIN*," said Mora with a twinkle in his eye.

Mora—the godson of mime artist Marcel Marceau—was raised in Melbourne, where he founded the company that still publishes *Cinema Papers*, Australia's answer to *Variety*. Although his early films suggested his forte was the documentary field—*THE DOUBLE-HEADED EAGLE*, *SWASTIKA, BROTHER CAN YOU SPARE A DIME*—he returned to Australia to direct *MAD DOG* and followed this with *THE BEAST WITHIN* and *THE RETURN OF CAPTAIN INVINCIBLE*.

THE HOWLING II was made on a low budget of \$2 million, with a telescoped production schedule of location shooting in Czechoslovakia for six weeks, followed by a two week stint in Los Angeles. Mora insists the sequel will share the same camp approach as the original and will in no way let our high expectations down. There will be no prologue lifted from sequences in *THE HOWLING*, although Mora and company do recreate the final climactic scenes to springboard Robert Sarno and Gary Brander's new screenplay.

The film begins at Dee Wallace's funeral and her brother (Reb Brown) has arrived in L.A. to avenge her death. There Stefan (Christopher Lee) informs him that his sister isn't really dead, as the modern day werewolf has developed an immunity to the silver used for the bullets that according to legend are the only way to kill them. Together with actress Annie McEnroe, they travel to Transylvania in an effort to stop Stirba, the Witch Queen (Sybil Danning), from ruling the werewolves, who plan to reveal themselves on the night of an imminent configuration of planets. But there is something that Stefan hasn't revealed. He is Stirba's brother and he has been plotting her destruction for many years.

"The impending Gotterdammerung of werewolves was my main contribution to the script," said Mora. "I felt there had to be a reason for the whole premise. The script of this film you could liken to minestrone, as there have been nine drafts of it. I felt a big change was needed, and the journey back to Transylvania—to the root of all horror so to speak—was perfect."

The prosthetic makeup team behind *THE HOWLING II* consists of Americans Jack Bricker, Steve Johnson and Scott Wheeler, backed-up by



Stirba, Queen of the Werewolves (Sybil Danning) engages in a virgin sacrifice amid local Czechoslovakian color. Below: Demonologist Christopher Lee and Danning.

Cosmokinetics, a company that has worked with everyone from Rick Baker to Stan Winston, according to Mora. So what exactly can we expect? "The first mammary transformation in the history of movies!" laughed Mora.

"We are going to use every known technique," he continued. We aren't restricting this to on-camera effects like *AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON* or *THE BEAST WITHIN*. We will have dissolves, cutaways, opticals and model animation. We are going to make the phony look fabulous by not showing too much. We are not going to dwell on the gore aspect. Christopher Lee doesn't like it and neither do I. There is a very fine line between horror and disgust. Films fail when they get too intense and turn off the audience.

The special effects became less important as the film progressed," continued Mora. "They have been done to death. Unless you've got millions to spend on the shape-shifting school of special effects, they aren't going to work. I don't think people are going to expect that, even though this is a sequel. We have a lot that effects fans haven't seen before, but that is just one element of this film. *THE HOWLING* was tremendous, but I didn't honestly think the performances were too good. The special effects were the best thing in it. Hopefully what people will say about the new one is that the picture as a whole is good."

Teaming Christopher Lee, the reigning King of Horror with Sybil Danning, the Queen of Exploitation, seems like inspired casting. "They both have cult followings and I thought it would be interesting to team them," said Mora. "I did *THE RETURN OF CAPTAIN INVINCIBLE* with Lee and not only is he the total professional, I also call him the self-focussing actor. If, out of the corner of his eye, he can see that the



focus puller isn't really doing his job, he'll move back three inches and get into focus himself. He's wonderful. Remember, too, that he has never appeared in a werewolf picture before, so this is definitely one for the film buffs. He really sells the audience on the fantasy without ever going over the top. Only his convincing deadpan delivery can make you believe lines about the forces of evil and the *dark country* of Transylvania. As for Sybil, she's a thorough trooper. Nothing was too much trouble for her even when she developed an eye allergy to her make-up and we had to stop shooting her scenes for a week."

Mora is in remarkably good spirits for an Australian Werewolf director, lately of Prague. Even though the strain is showing, he imparted some final words. "There is a tremendous market for these films because people do enjoy being scared. I remember seeing the early Universal horror films when I was a kid and they really scared me. I want to recapture that feeling you get from the early *FRANKENSTEIN* and *DRACULA* films, as an adult." □



Sybil Danning undergoes the makeup process to become a nude werewolf. Inset: An early clay prototype for the film's hirsute lycanthropes developed by special effects supplier Cosmokinetics. The makeup, by Jack Bricker, Steve Johnson and Scott Wheeler, won't seek to outdo the effects work of the original.

Return To OZ

Wander the Yellow Brick Road this summer, with a new cast of animatronic fantasy characters.

By Alan Jones

The Scarecrow has been deposed and is being held captive by the tyrannical Nome King. The Emerald City lies in ruins at the end of the Yellow Brick Road and its former residents have all been turned to stone. The Tin Man and the Cowardly Lion are now mere statues. Where is little Dorothy now that these familiar characters from the pages of American folklore need her most?

The answer lies in RETURN TO OZ, the Disney studios \$25 million sequel (of sorts) to MGM's 1939 classic, WIZARD OF OZ. The film—not a musical—opens May 24 in 70 mm and six-track stereo sound. Disney has held the rights to all 13 'OZ' sequels by L. Frank Baum for over 30 years, but their attempts at continuing little Dorothy's adventures in Baum's fantasy land—including a musical version planned in 1957—have all come to nothing for various reasons.

Now, with Oscar winning sound technician turned director, Walter Murch, executive producer Gary Kurtz and producer Paul Maslansky, Disney's long cherished ambition has finally reached fruition.

Fairuza Balk, a 10 year-old from Point Reyes, California, steps into Judy Garland's immortal ruby red slippers as the Kansas farm girl who is swept into the land of Oz—this time by a spectacular flood. With the aid of Billina, a talkative hen, Jack Pumpkinhead and Tik Tok, a helpful robot, Dorothy sets out to oppose the Nome King's regime and the evil Princess Mombi who owns a wardrobe of interchangeable heads and wants Dorothy's to add to her collection. Also starring Nicol Williamson, Piper Laurie, Jean Marsh, and Matt Clark, OZ began shooting on elaborate sets at Elstree studios in February last year.

Disney is down-playing the perception that RETURN TO OZ is just another effects vehicle. Said animatronic character creator Lyle Conway, "The film is about people and very real characters, with roots in accessible fantasy. It's not just a couple of rubber dummies and a little kid." □

Dorothy (Fairuza Balk) and Pumpkinhead Jack, one of her animatronic sidekicks, in Walt Disney's RETURN TO OZ.

**GOONIES:
TITLE, A MISNOMER**

Executive producer Steven Spielberg re-teams with GRELINS scripter Christopher Columbus, but it's not another hip monsterfest as the title suggests. Ke Huy Quan, Short Round of Spielberg's INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM, is the leader of a bunch of kids who go on an underground adventure as in JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH.

The kids get trapped in an underground cavern, built as a lavish set at the Warner Bros Burbank studio, complete with a grotto and pirate galleon. The kids trigger a series of pirate traps set hundreds of years before, and can't get out. Menaces include dancing skeletons, a giant octopus (said to resemble the one used in POPEYE), a gorilla, and the pirates themselves, descended into subhuman cave dwellers like the Morlocks in George Pal's THE TIME MACHINE.

"It's like the Disney World ride 'Pirates of the Caribbean'—only for real," said a source close to the production. Warner Bros' marketing concept, when the film is released June 7, will be the Jolly Roger emblem of the skull and crossbones. The film is directed by Richard Donner from a Columbus script said to have been rewritten by Tom Mankiewicz.

And the title? The kids come from a town called Goon.

**SANTA CLAUS:
TOUGH ON REINDEER?**

Rumor circulating in London film circles is that reindeer have been slaughtered needlessly by the effects unit on SANTA CLAUS—THE MOVIE. The animals were said to have been killed to fabricate a full-sized team of galloping mechanical reindeer which pull Santa's sleigh. The reindeer, which feature prominently in the film, are also being rendered in miniature (both 6" and 12" versions) and as hand puppets, by an effects team headed by Derek Meddings.

Tri-Star releases the Alexander (SUPERMAN) Salkind production next Christmas, starring David Huddleston as Santa. John Lithgow provides spice as another off-the-wall villain, and Dudley Moore plays a rocketship-riding elf who challenges Santa to a race in order to convince him that delivering gifts by jet would be faster. The flying sequences are being filmed using the front-projection technique used in Salkind's SUPERGIRL.

FUTUREKILL

Futuristic, low-budget horror mixes politics, New Wave music, punk costuming and gore.

By Alan Jones

In production it was called SPLATTER. Now it's called FUTUREKILL. Texas-based Ron Moore, only 25, changed the name of his directorial debut because he didn't want to confuse the market with two films in simultaneous release with similar titles—the other being SPLATTER UNIVERSITY. Also the word splatter now has a connotation that Moore felt didn't reflect the content of his movie at all, as he goes to some lengths to claim that it isn't a blood 'n' guts film.

"Basically it's about some fraternity members on a *Hell Night*," Moore explains. "They kidnap a 'no nuke' protester to make him the mascot of a party they have planned. The nuclear movement is based downtown and the guy they eventually grab turns out to be the very radical leader of the whole group. That's the character called Splatter. The film is set in the near future—about 1988—and is very conceivable as a plot if the peace movement continues as it is. I suppose it is a hard film to categorize as it combines a wide range of aspects like a New Wave score, camp humor, serious statement, and just a smattering of gore."

Moore is convinced that FUTUREKILL will work because, as he explains, "It will catch audiences off guard as it starts out as a fairly raucous comedy and switches to being something else in quite a nightmarish fashion."

Moore wrote FUTUREKILL with Kathy Hagan and John Best when the idea for another film seemed to be going nowhere. "It was called DEATH IN CRIMSON but it needed financing beyond a limit I could locate. So John and I devised SPLATTER and

brought Kathy into the project so we could amalgamate her anti-punk fashion designs and ideas."

Next Moore set about providing the most complete package ever to induce a major financier to take the first tentative step into film production. "I had completed storyboards, a cast and crew already lined up, the look of the film outlined on colour plates and some of the music already composed when I went to see our backer, Don Barker. He's a private entrepreneur in Austin, Texas, who has a lot of companies to his name. Anything he could ask me was down on paper somewhere, even a breakdown of how similar films had fared in the marketplace. FUTUREKILL cost just under a million dollars, and obviously I felt extremely responsible for that money. But in Texas your dollar does go further. I feel we have achieved a higher quality look than most other films in our price bracket. We shot in 35mm Panavision."

Another major reason why the film got financed in the first place was the inclusion very early on in the casting process of Edwin Neal. Neal was the cannabilistic hitchhiker who put Texas on the horror map forever in THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE. "I met Ed when I was a student at the University of Texas," said Moore. "He would sell us film posters. I pulled Ed into the project because I realized the CHAINSAW hook was potent enough to get possible backers interested in the project. It turned out that he had maintained a good friendship over the years with Marilyn Burns, the victim in CHAINSAW and when we were discussing one of the characters in the film, Dorothy Grim, it both hit us at the same time that she would be perfect for the part. As she is the character that kills Ed's Splatter, she gets a sort of revenge on him for all he put her through in CHAINSAW! Wayne Bell, our soundman, Murray Church, our production manager, and Robert Burns who did some of our special makeup effects, all worked on THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE too. Everyone else on the film was in my age range."

Moore has always been interested in film and worked for Texas Instruments making 70mm seismological films for oil companies and managed theatres for the American Multi-Cinema chain. "It was a good solid base but nothing really prepared me for the rigors of full-scale film production. My inexperience made me more open to ideas and I gave a lot of autonomy to the different departments. For example, I told Kathy to go wild with the costume designs. That's why we have such marvelous things in FUTUREKILL, like Splatter's intravenous, electronic speed system, where all he does is push a button and



Ed Neal as Splatter, a futuristic nuclear protester fitted with razor-like claws.

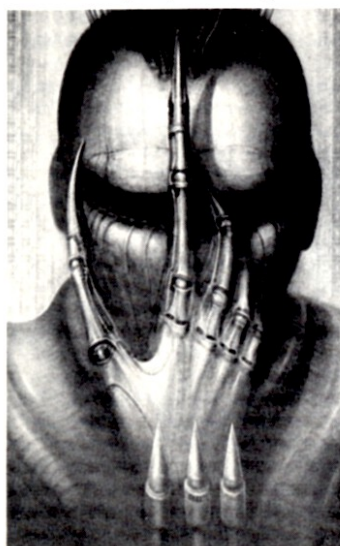
amphetamine is automatically injected into his arm."

In all, FUTUREKILL took six and-a-half weeks to shoot. An initial month was shot in August 1983 in downtown Austin's deserted alleyways and the remaining work was done in February 1984, which mainly comprised all the major effects. But Moore realized very early on that SPLATTER as a title had to go.

"John and I were trying to name the characters in the script in the same manner as pop stars like Billy Idol," said Moore. "You know, a really rugged surname, teamed with a homely given name. We made a list and Splatter just seemed right for the character and the title. But whenever we talked about the film for publicity purposes we got the reactions you would expect. The splatter is still there, but it's cut to a minimum. There is one death inflicted by a ghurka knife but for the most part the violence is tasteful—one is shot behind a sheet of tin for example, leaving more to the imagination. I certainly didn't want to get lumped with SPLATTER UNIVERSITY or other gross offerings like that!"

If all goes according to Moore's well laid plans, FUTUREKILL should be in release in America soon. Magic Shadows, the company we have set up, will probably distribute the film. I want more control than turning it over to a larger company (who could possibly mishandle it) would allow. I set out to make FUTUREKILL a cross between NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK, and NATIONAL LAMPOON'S ANIMAL HOUSE. There was no one in the production who was old-school enough to say I couldn't do it, so I absolutely refuse to sit by and not get the best for all the team out of it." □

H.R. Giger's poster design.



WHEN THE RAIN BEGINS TO FALL

Pia Zadora, rock n' roll aliens and effects, in the Beach Party idiom.

By Dennis Fischer

Twenty years ago Tommy Kirk played a Martian who came down to visit Annette and the beach party gang in PAJAMA PARTY. Now an alien rock 'n' roll band has come to earth to compete in a high school battle of the bands in WHEN THE RAIN BEGINS TO FALL (formerly VOYAGE OF THE ROCK ALIENS) starring Pia Zadora, Ruth Gordon, Jimmy and the Mustangs, and the rock group Rhema as the alien invaders. Star Pia Zadora describes the film,

Aliens Nolan and the Rhema Band.



scheduled for release at Easter, as a "compilation of rock videos."

"It's very youth oriented, basically for kids five to 16," said Zadora. "It's a little bit of E.T. mixed-in with STAR WARS. It's beach party stuff, like the Annette Funicello-Frankie Avalon films. It's sheer entertainment, nothing heavy, nothing serious, no story, but lots of music, lots of dancing."

The project was put together by Max Keller and Mike Curb (the former Lt. Governor of California) to showcase the various musical artists they represent. The title of the film comes from one of the songs which enjoyed top chart rankings in Europe and is performed by Jermaine Jackson and Zadora. The film is directed by Jim Fargo, the unit production manager of JAWS and director of EVERY WHICH WAY BUT LOOSE.

"It's kind of a sequel to SANTA CLAUS CONQUERS THE MARTIANS," kidded Zadora, referring to the film which marked her acting debut at the age of six. "It was very well done considering it was shot 20 years ago—gimme a break—and really is very entertaining. It's become a Christmas classic, really."

The special effects are being handled by Image Engineering under the

direction of Peter Chesney, who has worked on such films as SWAMP THING, and RADIOACTIVE DREAMS (collaborating on that film's giant rat). Said Chesney, "We designed the interior of the aliens' spaceship, built it, and trucked it to Atlanta, Georgia. We did all the location effects, which ranged from exploding characters to green milkshakes, and setting up a phone booth to land with retro-rockets, which we lowered from a crane while doing some pyrotechnic work."

Chesney built a 14-foot long hydraulic tentacle for a series of sequences, including one underwater. One of the running jokes in the film is that you never see what the tentacle is attached to. At one point, it wraps itself all the way around the high school where the battle of the bands is to take place and there still doesn't seem to be an end to it. Finally, disgusted, the tentacle packs its suitcase and leaves for Loch Ness.

Tony Trembley, production designer of visual effects, explained the concept behind the film's spaceship design. "It's tongue-in-cheek all the way," he said. "They wanted the aliens to pilot a giant guitar. I made a kind of New Wave, Stratacaster-type



High school girl Pia Zadora falls for Tom Nolan, leader of the Rock Aliens.

design and painted it with metallic copper and green. It's kind of my tribute to George Pal's WAR OF THE WORLDS. I like that color combination.

"The director wanted to see the ship take off like a Tex Avery cartoon," continued Trembley. "The neck of the guitar was cut off, cast in a mold, and we made a rubber neck for it. It was painted to look like the real ship and placed on an armature. A guy named Tony Doublin animated it, the neck bending back and then the whole thing shooting off into space."

The aliens transport to earth via teleport booths, one of which they disguise as a telephone booth and send down ahead to materialize them when they arrive, a slightly more believable form of transport than STAR TREK's transporter where characters materialize out of thin air. In addition to this special booth, Trembley designed a forced perspective miniature of the high school which is later put under wrap by the tentacle. Trembley's most elaborate effect, a shot of the alien's spaceship crashing through the film's title in breakaway urethane, has been scrapped due to the title change.

Chesney supervised the building and operation of the film's robot. "It's disguised as a mild-mannered fireplug," said Chesney. "It's a radio controlled hydrant that has good street mobility. The eyes and eyebrows work, and it can talk. At one point we have a dog come up to pee on it, and it pees first."

As Pia Zadora said, "It's not for a sophisticated audience." She goes on to add, "The humor is really silly. I think kids will love it because for them, this is fresh, new stuff; but really, it's basically the same old stuff that's been very entertaining for years, only presented in a very modern way. I enjoyed doing it because basically I'm a singer-dancer-actress, and in this film I got to do all three, and I had a lot of fun doing it." □

THE NIGHT OF THE HORROR KING

Horror master Stephen King, approximately 1.5 sheets to the wind, looked to be having the time of his life, joking, signing autographs, and slugging down beers given to him by a near endless stream of fans, autograph hounds, well wishers, and assorted supplicants at a party given for him in Dallas' trendy Inwood Lounge.

Many of the people had never read one of King's books, but they'd seen the film adaptations of his works. King was in Dallas as the guest of honor at the Third Annual World Drive-In Movie Festival and Custom Car Rally, held Halloween weekend.

The Drive-In Festival is one of those strange neo-non-cultural events that only happen in Dallas, a city where the opening of a shopping mall is turned into a thing of mythic proportions. Organized by the invisible drive-in critic Joe Bob Briggs and sponsored by the Dallas Times Herald, the Drive-In Festival is a bizarre mixture of satire and homage. It isn't a drive-in festival, really—it was held at a "hardtop," namely, the Inwood Theatre, a lavish cinema of the old style located in the Dallas equivalent of Rodeo Drive. This one wasn't actually the Third such festival either—the first one, in 1982, featured Roger Corman and a retrospective of his

movies, but according to Briggs, he forgot to put one together in 1983.

All that aside, this fete was, for all intents, King's alone, and he played it to the hilt, delivering the opening ceremonies and administering the Drive-In Oath to the attendees. ("We are drive-in mutants. We are not like other people..."—it began, and degenerated from there.) He then professed to being a drive-in movie addict from way back, so much so in fact, that his wife went into labor with their second son while the two of them were at a drive-in watching THE CORPSE GRINDERS. He claimed to have watched the ending before taking his wife to the hospital.

Between screenings of King-inspired movies, the author fielded questions from the audience. He

Stephen King signs autographs.



cited CUJO as his favorite adaptation, because "it's big and bad and not very bright. It's like Sonny Liston—it just stands in one place and keeps punching away." Conversely, he listed THE SHINING as an "inspired failure." King felt that FIRESTARTER fell somewhere in between, "missing a chance somewhere along the way to be a truly awful picture, like MYRA BRECKINRIDGE."

As to future projects, King confirmed that he and director/producer George Romero are finally making headway on the adaptation of THE STAND. King's current screenplay puts the projected film at a running time of just under three hours. Negotiations are currently underway with Universal for a package that would include PET SEMETARY, also to be done with Romero, to be made in King's home state of Maine. THE STAND, Romero's most ambitious project to date, will be filmed in Texas. King was ambiguous about the progress of CREEPSHOW II, but hinted that the project is in critical condition, if not dead.

King was presented with his Lifetime Achievement Award, an inscribed Chevy hubcap, officially signifying him for all time as the King of Drive-In movies for 1984.

Ray and Katalin Ellis

RAZORBACK

An impressive horror film debut for director Russell Mulcahy, Aussie stylist of rock video.

By Alan Jones

Based on a novel by Peter Brennan, RAZORBACK is an impressive debut in the fantasy genre for 31 year-old Australian born Russell Mulcahy—a 'wunderkind' of the rock video field. Basically a JAWS on land story, RAZORBACK is about a giant cannibalistic pig that causes havoc in the Australian outback. Waner Brothers gave the film a test run in Los Angeles last November but has no plans for a wider release.

The film chronicles actor Gregory Harrison's quest to find out the truth behind his T.V. presenter wife's disappearance when she goes to Sydney to cover a kangaroo slaughter controversy.

Through a script written by Everett de Roche (PATRICK and ROAD GAMES), and within the basic hackneyed framework of RAZORBACK, Mulcahy astutely comments on Australian culture. He thrills, amuses and moves us in a classic pop culture horror picture firmly rooted in basic Brian DePalma and Tobe Hooper, two of his idols. Mulcahy is currently directing THE HIGHLANDER for Davis/Panzar Productions and 20th Century Fox, an epic story of immortal beings in Scotland, spanning four centuries.

Until Mulcahy arrived in London six years ago, it is safe to say that no rock video promotional industry existed until he spearheaded the trend that would eventually lead to MTV. Mulcahy laid the foundations others would soon follow under the auspices of Jon Roseman. He brought a lavish style to mini-epics on virtually no budget and often ploughed back his fee into the production to give his work the showcase it deserved.

Among the hundreds of videos Mulcahy has been responsible for are: "Total Eclipse of the Heart," Bonnie Tyler, "Rio," Duran Duran, "Tonight I'm Yours," Rod Stewart, "Gypsy," Fleetwood Mac, "I'm Still Standing," Elton John, "Vienna,"

Ultravox, to name but a few. His personal favorites are the IF inspired "Elton's Song", Chas Jankel's "Ai No Corrida" and "The Voice" by Ultravox.

Two videos consolidated Mulcahy's position at the forefront of this burgeoning industry. They were "Video Killed the Radio Star" by The Buggles, which was his first concept clip to have a major impact in the U.K., and the one that brought his name to America—Kim Carnes' "Bette Davis Eyes," which was the first time a record label admitted to a video affecting world sales.

Said Mulcahy, "The producers of RAZORBACK, Hal and James McElroy, had made PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK and THE LAST WAVE and wanted me for the film because they saw my video for Duran Duran's "Hungry Like the Wolf," and liked it a lot. I thought that doing a JAWS-like monster movie may not be a bad idea and I did think I'd be able to give it a new perspective. The thought of going back to Australia, going back to my roots so to speak, was another attractive plus."

RAZORBACK eventually cost 5½ million Australian dollars and while that seems like a lot, especially knowing Mulcahy's track record with inflated budgets, he arrived on the production to find that a good share of that sum had already been spent. "They had already started building this computerized running pig which I told them from the very start wouldn't work. Look at KING KONG and THE WHITE BUFFALO for good examples of that waste. I knew it could never simulate the correct movements and I stated point blank that it wasn't going to be in the film. We shot it, and it looked predictably awful. The best shot we did of the pig—and we should have done more of them in retrospect—was with a real large pig in a suit.

"If I had had the choice I would have done a scaled down model of the pet food factory in the climactic



The silhouette of the razorback, a giant pig, never glimpsed fully in the film.

scenes and had some Harryhausen-type stop-motion," continued Mulcahy. "I think that's what you miss most in the film, the hooves and the dust. Most of the time we used a cable controlled head for the closeups and for some other shots we had something which was called the Two Man Boar, which to my knowledge only ever had one man in it! That effects rig was useless anyway as the back half was totally rigid. We also had a ramming pig on rails too that was like a 5 o'clock special which we used for the scene at the beginning where it decimates a house."

After an infamous preview in Los Angeles, U.S. distributor Warner Brothers demanded cuts. "We thought the preview had gone extremely well until we read the report cards which were about 20% favorable," said Mulcahy. "The rest were along the lines of 'this is the cruellest, most evil film I've ever seen—and I've kept your pen, you bastard!' This freaked out Warners who felt the plot had gotten lost. My original version was a lot gorier. All the deaths were dwelled upon in the most obvious places. There really isn't any blood left now in the film which in some ways heightens its impact."

From a three minute video clip to a feature length movie is a bit of a dra-

matic step, but Mulcahy took it all in stride. "Prior to the first day of shooting, I arrived early at the location—Broken Hill, MAD MAX territory—and just sat there petrified at the thought of all the responsibility the ensuing 8 weeks would hold," said Mulcahy. "It completely overwhelmed me. This wasn't helped by the fact that the first time I walked into a production meeting to face all these people armed with note pads, they wondered where the director was!"

As to be expected, a lot of the preview cards in America indicated that the audience felt RAZORBACK was like a two hour MTV video. Mulcahy himself isn't quite sure if that is indeed a valid criticism in these days of vast changes in the film world and our perception of it. "In some ways I take that as a compliment," he said. "I don't call it video imagery, it is my imagery, belonging to me whether I do films or videos. It's what I've always been doing and always will do. I'm a great fan of fantasy films."

In Australia, reviews for the film were mixed. Cheap tabloids loved it but highbrow papers had words to the effect that the film was a great Australian embarrassment, one that would set the industry back 10 years. A sample review said "It looks like POLTERGEIST wandering around a 'Top of the Pops' set." Comments like that meant RAZORBACK didn't fare too well at the boxoffice although Mulcahy still sees one major problem at the root of its failure. "It stems back to my one nagging doubt about the project," he said. "Who really wants to go and see a film about a killer pig?"

"I made RAZORBACK primarily as a thriller for horror fans who were probably sick to death of seeing the same old boring splatter," continued Mulcahy. "I lost touch with those films after a while so I made a film I wanted to see. As entertaining as possible with the interest kept at a dynamic level whenever the story showed signs of flagging. As far as I'm concerned, RAZORBACK was one from the heart." □

Left: Star Gregory Harrison hallucinates in the desert. Right: Director Russell Mulcahy in the climactic slaughterhouse setting.



GHOULIES

Rising makeup star John Carl Buechler works wonders on a low budget for Charles Band's Empire Pictures.

By Dennis Fischer

"The GHOULIES will get you in the end," say the ads, picturing a water ghoulie rising from a toilet bowl. Unfortunately, the film isn't nearly as amusing as the ad campaign, but this Charles Band production does have the ghoulies themselves to offer, intriguing puppet mechanisms created by rising low-budget makeup star John Carl Buechler (say Beckler).

A graduate of Roger Corman's New World school of filmmaking, Buechler's best-known work until GHOULIES was the startling Klaus Kinski decapitation scene from Aaron Lipstadt's ANDROID, produced by Corman. Buechler, a makeup practitioner from the midwest (Illinois and Missouri), got his start in Hollywood working for Stan Winston (on THE ISLAND) and Rick Baker (on THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING WOMAN). After a spate of little-seen solo low-budget assignments, Buechler found a home at producer Charles Band's Empire International Pictures.

"What really attracted me to working with Charles Band is that, since Roger Corman, I haven't seen such a 'no bullshit' attitude from anybody," said Buechler. "I've been dealing with the Hollywood scene for some time. There is a frame of mind here, what George Lucas calls 'the cocktail party atmosphere.' People don't say what they mean, they say what sounds good. When Band tells you something, he sticks to it."

To entice Buechler to take on the GHOULIES effects, Band offered the promise of a future directing assignment, a cherished goal for Buechler. Within weeks, Buechler was directing a segment of Band's horror anthology THE DUNGEON MASTER, and currently has TROLL in development with Band, an ambitious fantasy project that will mark Buechler's feature film debut as director.

GHOULIES is directed by another first-timer, actor Luca Bercovici, according to Buechler the son of the producer of SHOGUN, and features cameos by Jack Nance of ERASERHEAD fame and horror queen Bobbie Brisse. Inevitably, the film will be seen as a rip-off of GREMLINS, though the story is



Empire International Pictures executive producer Charles Band poses with Michael Des Barres as resurrected warlock Malcolm in makeup by John Carl Buechler.

quite different, and Band was trying to put together a film called BEASTIES, with makeup artist Stan Winston directing, long before the Spielberg film.

"There's a lot of the little creatures in the film, and they do a lot of neat things," Buechler said. "We have ghoulies from every environment. We have ghoulies from the water; we have ghoulies from the sky; we have ghoulies from the ground. They burrow out, or they fly, or they're domesticated, or they're wild."

Ghoulies take the place of weapons in the story, a change from the script by Bercovici and Jefery Levy, a change suggested by Buechler.

"When the script was originally given to me, two little imps played by actors were supposed to kill people with an axe," explained Buechler. "How many times in movies have you seen people killed with an axe? Too many, right? So I suggested that since we've got these neat little creatures, why cut off someone's head again? Why not have the imps pick up a ghoul-

ie and throw it at somebody, and let the ghoulie do the killing. That was intriguing. So the ghoulies became the ones who did the dirty deeds."

Buechler made 12 sketches for the little creatures, and Band selected five of them. Band decided he liked the Ghoulies enough not to want to cheapen the project by using other planned gimmicks like 'scratch and sniff' cards and 3-D. The creatures were sculpted by Buechler in just one week.

Said Buechler, "I would sculpt each ghoulie at night, based on a sketch Band approved, paint the sculpture, take photographs of it, and bring the pictures to Charlie the next morning. Within a week, I'd sculpted all five ghoulies, and then we started building."

Buechler rented a shop and hired Chris Biggs, Everett Burrell, and Rob Cantrell as his core crew, forming Mechanical and Makeup Imageries, Inc., a company that is supplying effects for a number of Charles Band productions. The molds and mechanisms to make the ghoulies work were fabricated

in the space of five weeks. During that time, Buechler also created the special effects makeup for and directed the sequence in THE DUNGEON MASTER.

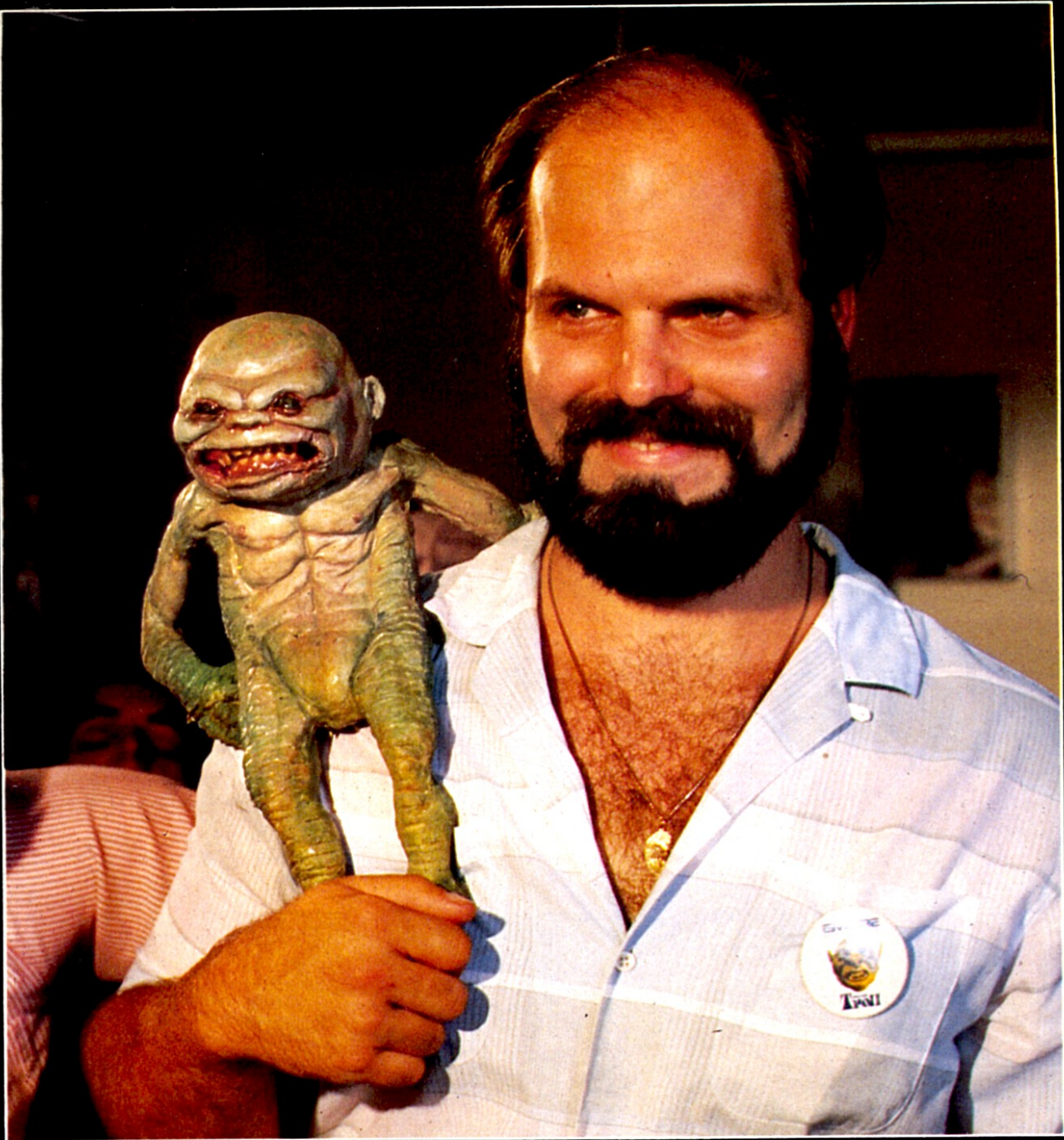
"In reality we had more like three-and-a-half or four weeks for GHOULIES," said Buechler. "I've never been involved with something that came together so quickly. I'm really pleased with the outcome though. The special effects look very good considering that the entire movie, including special effects, was shot in roughly six weeks. And not one frame was storyboarded. All the ghoulie shots were sort of pulled out of our hat, done by the seat of our pants."

Two other assignments completed by Buechler for Band's Empire International Pictures include: TRANCERS, a science fiction/detective thriller in which agents from the future come back in time to alter history; Buechler describes the film, shot in three and-a-half weeks, as Philip Marlowe meets TIME AFTER TIME; and MANDROID, about an injured test-pilot rebuilt as half-man/half-machine, with interchangeable parts; Buechler has built the robot, to be played by actor Patrick Reynolds.

In addition, Buechler is scheduled to work on a number of upcoming Band projects including JOURNEYS THROUGH THE DARK ZONE, TERRORVISION, for which Buechler has designed a TV monster that emerges from the video tube; ZONE TROOPERS, about intergalactic warriors fighting in the midst of WWII; ALTEREGO, about aliens that program violence on Earth for their viewing amusement—Buechler is designing the Lizard-like extraterrestrials; and LASERBLAST II, a sequel to Band's earlier hit, using makeup in place of stop-motion animation effects.

But Buechler is most excited about TROLL, the fantasy project he is set to direct for Band, supplying the makeup effects as well. Buechler describes the project, written by Ed Naha, as "J.R.R. Tolkien meets POLTERGEIST."

"It's a film for children that will probably be PG-13," said Buechler. "I'm going to make it as dynamic as I can. I'm not going to pull any punches. It will be terrifying." □



John Carl Buechler, head of Mechanical and Makeup Imageries, Inc., poses with one of the cable-controlled puppets created for GHOULIES.



The Cat Ghoulie



The Rat Ghoulie



The Water Ghoulie

What to do, and what not to do, shooting special effects on a low budget.

DREAMSCAPE is an anomaly in today's market, a high-quality, low-budget, independent feature (reviewed 14:4/14:5:105) that got picked-up for distribution by one of the majors. Costing \$10 million less than Douglas Trumbull's BRAINSTORM, the film covers similar thematic ground but has a lot more fun doing it. Dennis Quaid's winning performance as psychic neer-do-well who turns out to have a heart of gold gives the film's exploration of the world of dream research and political assassination a sense of high adventure.

DREAMSCAPE's title encapsulates both the film and the mental landscape that its independent filmmakers occupied for almost three years. Its creators hoped that the production would not only prove to be a success, but that it would also give them the clout to go on to bigger, even more ambitious projects. Featuring elaborate special effects by Peter Kuran's Visual Concept Engineering Company and makeup effects by Craig Reardon, the film was launched as the first outing of newly-formed Zupnik-Curtis Productions.

Producer Bruce Cohn Curtis is one of the few men left in Hollywood who still has ties to its fabled beginnings, the nephew of the legendary Harry Cohn, one of the founders of Columbia Pictures. Looking the producer, from his immaculately clipped hair down to his tailored, sharply creased suits, a chill falls over any set that Curtis walks onto. With a military air of no-nonsense, Curtis keeps a close eye on his productions and is happy only if filming is on schedule. On DREAMSCAPE he was unhappy a lot.

"I'm tyrannical on a set," Curtis says with a smile of relaxed authority. "That's why I use the people I have as well as I do. Many of the people on DREAMSCAPE have worked with me before and have come back because I am a perfectionist and won't settle for less. I have a standard of excellence in my films that I've always maintained, no matter what the cost, so that even though you might not like the stories I've done, the look of the film is always rich."

Remembering that he had to prove himself publicly in an industry filled with people just waiting for the newest Cohn to fail, for his first effort Curtis made OTLEY, a sharp-edged spy spoof/drama with Tom Courtney as an ersatz spy who

finds his make-believe assignment being taken very seriously by the other side. The film died at the box office, but drew good critical notices. The industry sat up and noticed; Harry Cohn's nephew was off and running.

Curtis partnered with various producers for awhile, including Irwin Yablans on HELL NIGHT, but chafed at being the junior partner without clout. The matter came to a head when he was making THE SEDUCTION with Yablans and grew tired of having his ideas ignored.

Curtis resolved to start his own company and make pictures his way. He found financial backing from businessman Stanley Zupnik, and was looking for scripts to start Zupnik-Curtis Productions when associate producer Chuck Russell brought in director Joe Ruben and the DREAMSCAPE script. Curtis had worked previously with both and gave the green light for Ruben and Russell to begin revising the script, written by David Loughery.

Ruben discovered Lowery's script in 1981 at the William Morris Agency, which represents both

artists. Lowery, a television writer, had come out to Hollywood in 1979 after winning a scriptwriting contest sponsored by Columbia Pictures, while a student at the University of Iowa. Ruben had just finished directing the TV-pilot for BREAKING AWAY, and was looking for a new project.

Once Ruben started reading the DREAMSCAPE script he found he couldn't put it down. The vision Loughery described was breathtaking, with rivers ablaze and boats filled with the undead. Ruben was excited by the property and showed it to Russell, his assistant director on JOY RIDE and GORP (also starring Dennis Quaid), films made with Bruce Cohn Curtis for producer Samuel Z. Arkoff. Russell suggested they take the script to Curtis and his new company.

It took seven months for Ruben and Russell to rewrite DREAMSCAPE; with Curtis providing detailed criticism and ideas throughout. Loughery was brought back in to help write the final draft.

"We knew some things in Loughery's script, like the holocaust dream at the end, were so

expansive that it was virtually unfilmable," said Russell about the changes that were made. "The original ending was set in New York. We changed that so we could do the movie out here in Los Angeles. In Loughery's script you saw all of New York on fire after the bomb had hit. You saw the Statue of Liberty, ferry boats filled with the undead, and flames across the harbor. It was really great, but I knew we couldn't afford to do it like that."

Russell and Ruben beefed-up the character of Buddy (Cory "Bumper" Yothers), the little boy whose nightmares are cured by the film's dream research project. In Loughery's script Buddy wasn't a running character. The idea for Buddy's character arose from concepts the writers picked up from the study of dream research.

"We found the case of a little boy who was having such terrible nightmares that he couldn't sleep," said Russell. "It was affecting him physically; we used that case as our model for Buddy. The first time in the film when Alex [Dennis Quaid] acts unselfishly is when he enters Buddy's dream to try and help him. He rises to the occasion and fulfills the role of hero."

Most changes made in the script did not alter Loughery's story significantly. In Loughery's original draft, the creature that menaces Buddy in the boy's dream and later reappears as the creature stalking the President and Alex was to be a rat-man. "We changed that because so much had been done with werewolves," said Russell. "This was right after THE HOWLING and AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON and we felt the difference between a man with a rat's face and a man with a wolf's face would be minimal.

"We wanted to take a different approach," Russell continued. "Not the direction of John Carpenter's Thing but something identifiable, so that when Tommy Ray changed into something to scare Alex, you would be able to see that it was Tommy Ray's version of the same creature. Joe Ruben wanted to go with something that scared him, and since he's scared of snakes, we went in that direction. I did some sketches of a snake creature and came up with something that really excited us because it was a departure from anything either of us had seen before. I think part of it came to me from my memories of



Special makeup effects supervisor Craig Reardon (right) poses for a test of the Snakeman created for the President's climactic dream at the Bronson caves location used for filming, with property master David Glazer (left) and makeup assistants Bruce Kasson and David Robert Cellitti. The trash bags on the monster's feet protected the suit from water and mud at the location which made filming difficult. Ultimately, Reardon's suit was replaced in the sequence by a stop motion puppet.



THE MAKING OF
DREAMSCAPE



seeing *THE SEVEN FACES OF DR. LAO*. When we showed it later to our effects people, Peter Kuran and Craig Reardon, they were really sparked by it too.

SHOPPING FOR SPECIAL EFFECTS

"Some of the rough figures from effects companies were just staggering in the amount of money, research and development time they would need."

Chuck Russell,
associate producer

Curtis liked the script. Russell was told to shop around for people who could create the film's extensive special effects and draw up a budget.

"It was very exciting to shop the script around and find out what could and couldn't be done," said Russell. "Some of the rough figures I got from effects companies were staggering in the amount of money, research and development time they would need. We just didn't have the preparation time or budget of something like *ALTERED STATES*."

"When we found Peter Kuran's VCE and Craig Reardon, and they got excited about the project, we knew they were perfect for it. They even helped sell the project because of their reputations. Reardon's for working on Steven Spielberg's *POLTERGEIST* and Kuran from his work with George Lucas."

Russell assigned the live action makeup effects to Reardon, and the miniature and optical work to Kuran's VCE company. Richard Taylor's MAGI company was also asked to contribute computer animated imagery for the film's "Dream Tunnel" effects. For the Dream Tunnel, Russell and Ruben wanted a semi-abstract look different from the other effects work in

the picture, a "hazy," dreamlike look, with an object or two from the upcoming scene to form and float towards the viewer to act as a visual cue for what was about to happen.

The effects sequences were storyboarded by Len Morganti; the budget was finalized on the basis of those storyboards. Because director Joe Ruben had not worked with special effects before, he carefully went through each scene with the storyboard artist.

"I knew that I had to be totally committed to my boards," said Ruben. "I spent a lot of time thinking through the sequences and how I wanted to shoot them because I knew if I didn't, the film would go out of control because the special effects people wouldn't know what they were responsible for and what had to be done with each shot. I was able to get just what I was looking for. Morganti would sketch out something and if I asked him to move it a little lower and more to the right, he'd be able to do it with just a few strokes of his pencil. It was almost like working with a camera."

The film's budget was approved in the fall of 1982, with a tentative start date set for early 1983. Russell and Ruben now began an intensive series of meetings with Kuran and Reardon to prepare for shooting.

A stop-motion animator was the last member of the effects team to be hired, done through VCE. Both Russell and Ruben had agreed early on that the best and cheapest way to get what they wanted from the Snakeman sequences would be with a mixture of live-action and stop-motion effects, but they were unsure just how they would mix the combination.

"I knew we would need a good animator," said Russell. "I knew a live-action Snakeman with its long neck and swishing tail would never work in a master shot. We didn't have umpteen million dollars for physical effects." Russell and Ruben planned to use low-key, flickering lighting for the sequences in order to seamlessly blend the two effects techniques.

Said Russell, "Joe and I sat down with the special effects people on the Buddy sequence storyboards, which is the first appearance of the Snakeman, and asked which way it made more sense to do it? It made sense to do the wide shots in stop-motion and the close-ups in live action, and in the cases where we weren't sure, we would have both of them overlap and whichever worked better, then that's what we would go with."

Although this arrangement was made in good faith and with the best intentions, the decision to let the two techniques overlap and not make a clear distinction between which shots would be assigned to each ultimately proved to be a decision that led to tensions and feelings of betrayal between makeup expert Craig Reardon and the production company.

Starting work around Christmas of 1982, Reardon had just three months to make the forms for and complete a full-sized Snakeman suit, two differently-featured articulated Snakeman heads, 12 assorted mutant makeups, a "change-o" head of Dennis Quaid for the climactic transformation, and a series of miniature heads which would be used for replacement animation sequences showing David Patrick Kelley changing from his own form into that of a Snakeman in the President's dream. For all the work that Reardon would put into the assignment, relatively little would actually make it to the screen in a form he would be happy with.

Among the first to have an inkling that there would be problems and delays with the film's production was stop-motion animator Jim Aupperle. Aupperle was to combine his stop-motion animating talents with the expertise he demonstrated for the effects camera work on *THE THING* and do the lighting, photography, and animation for the stop-motion scenes.

Aupperle was contacted in November of 1982 by Sue Turner of VCE and hired to organize the stop motion unit, along with Turner and VCE's Jim Belohovek. Aup-



THE FIRST DREAM which opens the film is the President's nightmare of his wife (Virginia Kiser) perishing in a nuclear blast (left), created by Peter Kuran's Visual Concept Engineering company. The sequence was first storyboarded (shown opposite page) by VCE artist Len Morganti. Kuran filmed the actress running on a treadmill against a blue screen (top left). Composited with the actress was a 4x5 plate of the New York skyline, stock footage of an A-bomb blast stretched anamorphically, and footage of the road. For the blast wave which overtakes the runner, Kuran tracked-in his camera on a rolling-pin device (bottom left), softened and altered the image via multiple printing and combined it with fire. The runner disintegrates down to her skeleton via rotoscoped animation. The complex sequence combined close to sixty separate elements.

LORD OF LIGHT

The career of effects filmmaker Peter Kuran, from STAR WARS to DREAMSCAPE and beyond.

He works with light itself; shaping it, coloring it and putting it on film in ways that couldn't be done with ordinary photography, and his work has become so subtle and refined that in some instances you can't tell you're watching a special effect.

The technique is called animation rotoscoping, and Peter Kuran is both an expert and innovator in the field, an increasingly important branch of effects photography because the use of optical and flare effects to "impersonate" energy fields in everything from high-tech space operas to sword and sorcery films, has become *de rigueur*. With a nice optical flash and a good electronic throb from the soundtrack, a piece of film can change from something with actors waving around an inert prop into an exciting piece of action with tremendous power and force; plus it doesn't have to be explained to an audience. They see the flare and know instinctively that it's something you don't mess with.

But an optical effect will only be believed if it looks "right," a difficult-to-define state of the art where something superimposed onto a piece of film actually looks like it could be there. If it doesn't look real, a vital link with the audience has been lost. Trying to make sure that opticals look as real as possible has been Peter Kuran's professional quest, but like many other biographies in this business, Kuran began his film career long before it actually became his profession.

Peter Gavin Kuran was born in New Jersey in 1957, and actually started his career when he was eight, and all because his grade school teacher was sick of Astronomy.

"Up until the second grade whenever teachers would tell me to do a book report, I would do some book on Astronomy. One of my teachers said she was tired of reading book reports on Astronomy. She wanted me to do a report on something else, and suggested photography, so I became interested in film and as a by-product of that, I became interested in motion picture work."

Kuran was not initially a genre film fan. His interest in film was purely technical, in the physical realities of processing and the various kinds of chemicals and film stocks used in production. He had no thoughts of actually trying to do anything professionally; it was just



Peter Kuran rotoscopes a reflection on R2D2 in STAR WARS.

something neat to play with. Then an uncle from California brought young Peter something that was going to change all that—a copy of Forest J Ackerman's seminal genre film magazine *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. Kuran was amazed! Here was a magazine that showed the fantastic things that people were doing with film and how they were done. Here were insert mattes and background mattes and stop motion animation, with the results vividly on display in movie theatres. From then on, the fantastic and film went solidly together for Kuran.

Amateur Work

"I set up a workshop in the basement at my parent's house and started working first with 8mm and then super 8, making stop motion shorts with clay figures. I basically started fooling around with double exposing on 8mm film stock and trying to cut out mattes. When I first got into super 8, I couldn't really backwind the camera, so I developed a system of rephotographing images that had been overlapped by using two projectors simultaneously."

During the evenings and weekends while in high school, Kuran took a job at a local theatre, watching films over and over to study them; during the day, he was busy teaching himself to use the school's video equipment. "I used to get good grades by making video tapes for class, usually put together a half hour before the class began. It was easy for me, and the teachers were easily impressed. By the time I got out of high school, I had acquired a cheap 16mm camera and worked in

that format too, plus, during that time, I had also figured out how to process film, including black and white reversal and color reversal films."

After high school, with the twin ambitions of striking out on his own and trying to find a way into the film industry, Kuran started looking for a college that would get him closer to his goal. It was to be quite a move for someone from New Jersey, for the way led west, to the California Institute of the Arts, a school known for its close ties to the film industry, and Walt Disney Studios in particular.

"I decided to go to Cal Arts because they were basically funded by Disney, and out of all the different colleges I had looked at, it had more equipment than a lot of places, so I figured if nothing else it would be good to have the experience of working with more professional equipment than I had worked with before. Plus, being associated with Disney I figured was a better situation to be in than being at some college in Deluth, with one course in filmmaking."

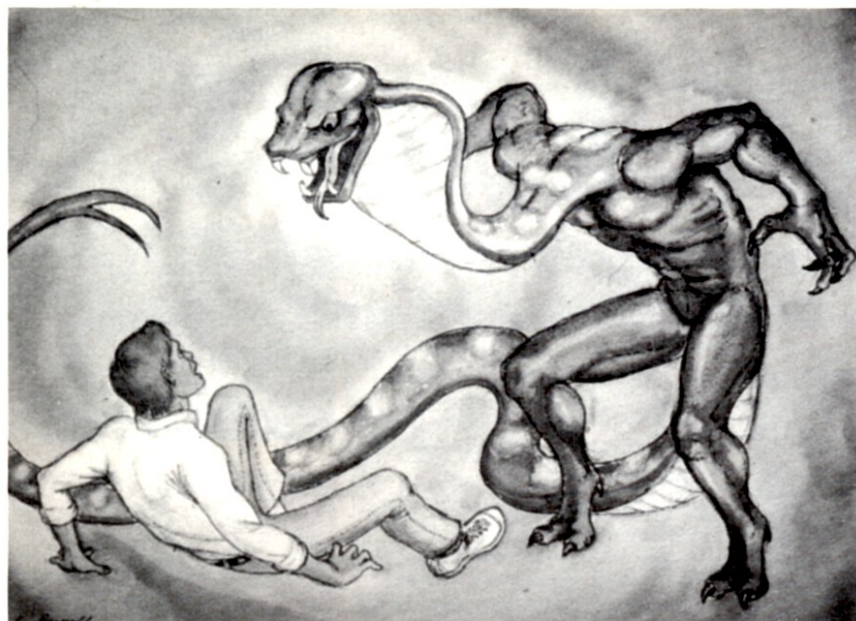
As a film school, Cal Arts was oriented toward animation, a kind of "Disney Farm," as it's been called. Kuran saw animators grind out endless reams of tracing paper covered with furry cute animals. This was not quite what he had in mind. Typically, as soon as Kuran got to Cal Arts and sized-up the situation, he started looking for ways to get as much as possible out of the school without actually having to do much course work. He soon found his chance and jumped at it.

"The first year I got on a study program, which basically was a non-existent program. You wrote up a paper on what your interests were and what you would do if you were given the chance to go to Disney Studios. I was one of the people picked, although I think it might have been because I was one of the few people that wrote up a proposal.

"I went to the studios and got to go to the optical department and watched them put together effects mattes using blue screen and sodium screen. I met

continued on page 37





Chuck Russell

Russell's Snakeman concept sketch which replaced the Ratman menace described in the script. As associate producer, Russell found the artwork aided in directing the work of the effects technicians.

perle's first job was to coordinate the sculpture of the stop-motion Snakeman, which was being done by Steve Czerkas, with the suit being built by Craig Reardon.

"They told me that they wanted to feature Craig's suit prominently, so I was going to try and make the miniature as close as possible to Craig's suit," said Aupperle. "We started with a man's armature and sculpted Craig's design over it. I knew we were going to have to make some changes, like making the tail longer so it could whip around, but I wanted to avoid one of those instances where the suit never matches the miniature. I'd run back and forth to Craig and measure his design with calipers just to make sure we were dead on.

"Since Craig's suit was being done in pieces our model was the first time the producers saw the way the design was going to come together. They wanted more changes than I ever expected. They actually had Steve Czerkas resculpt the model. It got away from the man-like design and no longer really matched the suit. I was a little concerned that the two would intercut, but that's what they insisted upon."

Causing Aupperle the most concern was the production's seeming lack of respect for the storyboards. "They wanted to be able to use Craig's suit any way they wanted," said Aupperle. "They didn't want to be tied down by storyboards. At one time they asked me to revise the storyboards. They said they'd just have to wing it on the set. That attitude left me little to do until they were done with the live action. I found the situation very distressing."

Although Russell and Ruben would have liked to have had more time to make sure their live action effects were on track, they had to start production in late January

when shooting locations had been scheduled for use. With hopes for the best, DREAMSCAPE began production on February 3, 1983, at the Los Alamitos thoroughbred race track where the film first picks up on the story of Alex, who is shown making a living by using his psychic powers to pick winning racehorses (an idea Russell had always wanted to use in a movie). A week's worth of shooting there was devoted to staging the two chase sequences with Quaid. The production then moved to various locations in the Los Angeles area, including Griffith Park and the California Institute of the Arts. The wide, official-looking corridors of the latter serve as the passageways in the dream research institute.

After three weeks, the production moved into an abandoned dormitory on the Brentwood grounds of the Veteran's Administration Hospital, a decrepit, two-story building, used only for storage. DREAMSCAPE's crew took over the upper story of the building and renovated one wing to serve as sets for the offices and sleeping quarters seen in the film. No special effects shooting was done during this period except for one brief live action shot where Reardon wore a pair of Snakeman hands and arms to attack Christopher Plummer as

he stands before an elevator.

Shooting went smoothly, but with some difficulty. The dormitory had been built shortly after the first world war, and the small rooms made setting up the lights and camera within the rooms a cramped experience, with the technical crew frequently jammed against one another in order to give as much room to the actors as possible. Filming was on schedule as of the third week in March, so the production was able to leave the Brentwood location and move on to interiors constructed at Raleigh Studios. The filmmakers were optimistic that they could finish shooting quickly and possibly have the picture released in the fall as they had hoped for when shooting began.

It would be the last time they would be so optimistic.

Raleigh Studios is a small, unadorned complex diagonal to and almost within the proverbial stone's throw of giant Paramount. It is one of the chain of independent studios used by small filmmakers in Hollywood. In the largest soundstage on the lot, carpenters constructed the interlocking jumble of "ruins" that would serve as the live-action backdrop for the President's holocaust dream. On this stage, Peter Kuran also supervised the installation of a huge blue

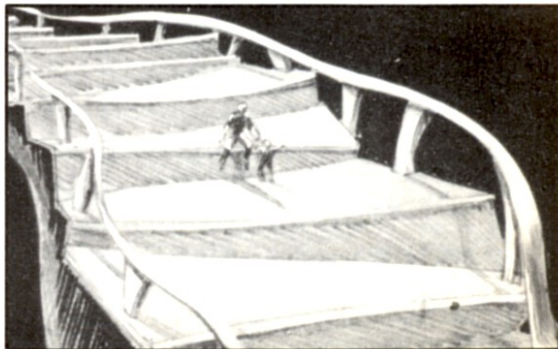
screen in front of which would be placed the sectioned trolley car in which Eddie Albert, as the President, and Dennis Quaid would be threatened by atomic mutants and David Patrick Kelly.

On an adjacent stage the set for the Dream Chamber was built. Outside, the set looked like a plywood igloo circled with florescent lights. Inside however, a small, padded chamber led to a main control room by a door and a large window. The set was a quiet haven, even when the normal racket of production was going on outside.

"The initial sketches of the set design for the Dream Chamber were some wild approaches that we felt were interesting, but not what we wanted," Russell said. "Some of them made us feel too much like we were on a spaceship, while others were more like a classic, BRAIN-STORM-type, wire-strewn lab. We decided we didn't want a lot of whirling lights and buzzers, but something quiet and womb-like. It was a very difficult set to design because we were trying to make something that looked authentic, but we didn't have any precedent for it."

From an aesthetic standpoint, the design worked wonderfully. From a practical standpoint however, problems cropped up immediately that led to several delays in shooting. The set itself had been designed by Alan Jones without consulting with director of photography Brian Tufano. Jones then abruptly left the production for personal reasons so that when the set was built, Tufano had still not been consulted during the shuffle to find a new set designer. Tufano had great difficulty in setting up his lights and camera within the small confines of the set. An outside computer graphics firm had been brought in to supply authentic looking medical displays for the many small monitors built into the set. Unfortunately, the computer wouldn't work right and left a full crew standing around collecting pay while technicians tried to figure out what had gone wrong with

For the young boy's nightmare, storyboard artist Len Morganti visualized a surrealistic staircase straight out of THE 5000 FINGERS OF DR. T, built in miniature (right) at VCE and composited with the actors in the sequence where Alex and the boy run from the Snakeman.



their expensive battery of equipment. Later, one of the technicians would quietly tell Russell that an Apple home computer would have been sufficient to give them the displays they wanted.

Outside the studio, things were not going any better. MAGI had now been at work several months on the Dream Tunnel effects footage, but neither Russell nor Ruben were happy with the test shots they were getting from Richard Taylor. As with the Disney Studio's opinion of the MAGI footage for SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES, Russell and Ruben felt that the animation they were getting was too "hard-edged." Said Russell, "The stuff we saw looked awesome, but it was too much like TRON, and we were looking for a more organic approach. When we saw Taylor's stuff we knew we were going in the wrong direction and we didn't have the money to try and change it."

THE SNAKE-MAN-IN-A-SUIT

"When director Joe Ruben got his first look at the Snakeman on the set he said, 'Oh boy, Reardon. I dunno... it's a rubber suit.'"

Craig Reardon, special makeup

Another problem that cropped up involved Reardon's Snakeman suit. Although an impressive work up close, Ruben felt that at even minor distances, it would seem as just a man in a rubber suit. Ruben and Russell still hoped that flickering low-level lighting would help, but Ruben began to realize that even with the extensive work he had put into planning the storyboard angles, the lighting was not going to be enough to sell the suit to an audience. Reardon firmly disagreed.

"Contrary to negative thinking about rubber suits, you've got to see them as something delightful, and full of potential for doing something wonderful," said Reardon. "You have to think of them almost as toys. Right when we were about

to shoot the basement struggle scene, I went aside with Ruben and said there are two ways of looking at this; you can think of this as a rubber suit which will look bad, or as something which, with the proper angles and lighting, will convince people that they're looking at a living, breathing, snarling Snakeman. Now when Ruben first saw it, he said 'Oh boy, Reardon, I don't know... it's a rubber suit.' I thought that had a dangerous ring to it if he really believed it, which was hard to tell because he, Russell, and Loughery had this camaraderie among the three of them based on this constant derogatory kidding. That's well and good and worth a few chuckles, but where it begins to become pernicious is when it begins to condition thinking to be truly negative."

Reardon also objected to the low-level lighting strategy that Ruben and cinematographer Brian Tufano used to film the suit. "Tufano seemed to have a fine contempt for any kind of supplementary light which would be, in logical terms arbitrary, but in dramatic terms exciting and interesting... something that would catch the eye, something that would fill in a face or create a little crosslight to show textures," said Reardon. "The naturalistic photography Tufano used can be very detrimental, I think, to SF and fantasy stories. You contrast this with the work of John Hora, who shot THE HOWLING and GREMLINS, and you see that special effects profit enormously from using special tiny spots and direct lighting. But I didn't feel it was my place to raise the issue."

Reardon did try to get his viewpoint across to the filmmakers by preparing a lighting test on video. The test was crude but illustrated the alternative Reardon was suggesting. "They ignored it," said Reardon of the test. "Yet, when they got on the set, they were completely vaporlocked on the suit. They didn't know what to do with it, and they didn't have any ideas. All the storyboards that had been prepared in advance were completely ignored. Not once did I see anybody bring up a storyboard and crack it open and say that for this frame here we need to set up this angle. All the audacious plans evaporated. Ruben may be good at doing Pom Pom pictures [his biggest hit is THE POM POM GIRLS], but he was at a loss to shoot special effects or rubber suits."

Russell, as associate producer, saw that the film was rapidly becoming a series of small delays that were gradually piling up into a big problem, causing the film to go over budget and over schedule. Russell blamed the delays on Reardon's suit.

"The problem is, that no matter what anybody tells you, makeup



Craig Reardon's live-action Snakeman suit, worn by stuntman Larry Cedar, crashes through the window of the stylized nightmare house built for the boy's dream at Raleigh studios, one of the brief glimpses of the suit remaining in the film. Inset: Cedar removes the head to take a breather between takes. Below: Dennis Quaid and Cory "Bumper" Yothers at the start of the sequence, showing the kind of flickering, low-key lighting chosen by the filmmakers to make the scene work.



effects are not an exact science," said Russell. "Mechanisms may only work in sequence just right for one take, and the pile of rubber suddenly comes to life. Craig [Reardon] bit off a lot on this show, and we all knew it going in, so he had to do some all-nighters trying to debug the mechanics. It's not the first time where an effect might not have worked going in, but we were forced into a situation where some of the effects had to be done with the principal actors and couldn't be done later, and we couldn't shoot them because an angle was wrong or because the latex needed to be fixed or a wire in the jaw broke."

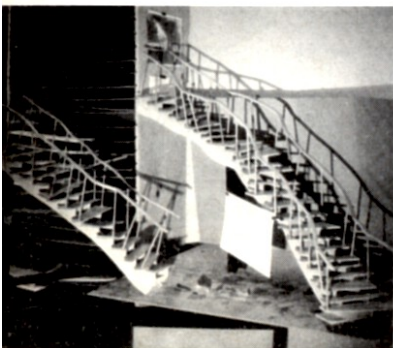
Another kind of problem arose in shooting the climax of the President's holocaust dream, set in a cave-like underground grotto decorated with fires, twisted girders and a glowing pool of green water. Originally it was planned to shoot the scene on a section of the "ruins" set at Raleigh Studios. But Russell found out that he could get a few days shooting time at Bronson Canyon. The site, long a favorite locale for low-budget productions,

is actually a short "Y" shaped tunnel through a jutting canyon wall in the nearby Hollywood hills. Open at all three ends and with a high ceiling, Ruben and Russell felt they could put up a more effective set inside the cave at relatively little cost to the production.

It didn't turn out to be quite that easy.

The art department scrambled—on something like 48 hours notice—to come up with a revised set for the cave. They did well, but lighting the set so that the lights themselves wouldn't show was a difficult task made harder by the fact that creating the pool of water just past the junction of the "Y" in the cave had turned the rest of its sandy floor into gritty muck that forced the crew to support the lights and camera on wooden planks and sandbags the best they could.

Working in the enclosed confines quickly turned miserable too. Brian Tufano, who had been hired because of his work on QUADROPHENIA and THE LORDS OF DISCIPLINE, is yet another British cinematographer who likes to



use smoke to diffuse his lighting to give the set greater visual depth. Every time Ruben went for a take, Tufano's assistants would pump the small, sealed cave full of hot, oily smoke and wait to see if the density was right. While the crew and stars quietly gasped behind their respirators, either more smoke would be pumped in if it wasn't enough, or they would have to wait while it settled if it was too much.

DOG DAYS AT BRONSON CANYON

"Producer Bruce Cohn Curtis said that the mutant dog looked like somebody's dirty laundry running across the floor."

Craig Reardon, special makeup

The first scenes that were supposed to be shot in the caves were thought to be relatively straightforward. Quaid, followed by Albert, is moving through the cave when they are attacked by a mutant dog. For the dog's costume, Reardon's assistant, Michiko Tagawa, had made some wonderfully revolting costumes.

"They were beautiful," Reardon said. "They had entrails bulging out of the body and exposed rib cages and boils and french fried skin. Now we were told that a Doberman would wear the costume, and in fact, the trainer had auditioned the dogs in a costume they worked in on *BUCK ROGERS*. So Michiko went to a great deal of trouble to measure the dobermans and I contributed sculptures for the heads while she built the body parts up from reject castings for the subway zombies." Once we got them suited up at the Bronson location however, the Dobermans refused to perform.

"The dogs tramped around in the mud and the zippers and their fur got packed with it," said Reardon. "It was a disaster. They took one of

the suits and tried to put it on a German Shepherd, a dog which is considerably different in body build."

In his big scene the dog was supposed to run a short distance and jump at Quaid. In take after take however, the dog merely trotted up to Quaid and stopped at his feet to try and shake the costume off. Eyes turned on the dog's embarrassed handlers who quickly explained that the dog usually didn't act like that; it was probably because he felt uncomfortable with the costume.

Reardon snipped parts of the costume's legs away, hoping to make it more comfortable, but this produced no better reaction. Next, the dog's owners took to furiously waving a little furry target at the dog, then quickly sticking it just inside Quaid's shirt while everyone enthusiastically urged the dog to attack. This made the dog think everyone just wanted to play. It would run up to Quaid, half-hop once, then bark excitedly while waiting for his trainers to get the toy again.

Quipped Reardon, "Bruce Cohn Curtis said the mutant dog looked like someone's dirty laundry running across the floor." Finally the dog made one decent leap past Quaid and Ruben called it a take. The shot is still in the film, although the rest of the mutant dogs were replaced with German Shepherds with their fur shaved in patches and dabbled with red goo.

The next scene planned for the cave involved Quaid and Albert, discovering it is a dead end and that the Snakeman is right behind them. It comes out of a side tunnel, snarls, and attacks Quaid. Ruben decided he wanted to use the full-sized Snakeman suit for the shot, and Reardon was given short notice to get it ready. At the time, Reardon was working full tilt to prepare the suit needed for the basement struggle in the boy's nightmare. A different head would be needed for the cave sequence.

"Russell got ahold of Bronson Canyon and said we've got to do the Kelly head [to look like David Patrick Kelly, playing the Presi-

dent's assassin] right away. You can't change things around like that. I said I'd try when I should have told him no."

Ruben shot Reardon's live Snakeman suit in the cave, although eventually discarded most of it and replaced the scene with a stop-motion cut. Also discarded was a small but important effect Reardon had worked very hard on getting right, a brief shot where Dennis Quaid "heals" a wound in his shoulder [see photo page 58].

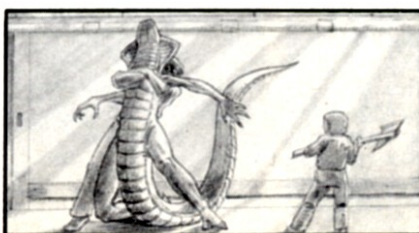
"We created a sort of bite effect, then put a plastic membrane over it and melted it with a plastic solvent so that when they ran the film backwards, the wound would heal," explained Reardon. "It didn't work as well as it did on the bench, which is frequently the case, but you did get a feeling of the actual fleshy material knitting itself. They opted to have Peter Kuran redo it with animation."

More successful was a Reardon-designed effect where Kelly, now distracted by an ingenious ploy of Quaid's, reverts to a half-human, half-snake form. While diverted, Albert sneaks up behind him and drives a length of pipe through Kelly's chest. For this shot, Reardon made a false chest with a mechanical rubber pole section inside that was connected to a spring and operated by cable. Albert would sneak up holding the pipe, then drop it out of camera sight as he lunged for Kelly, and the rubber pipe would burst through a section of painted tissue paper. Although the complex mechanical effect took some



Len Morganti

Visual effects art director Morganti's storyboards worked out with director Joe Ruben on the use of the Snakeman in the boy's basement nightmare.

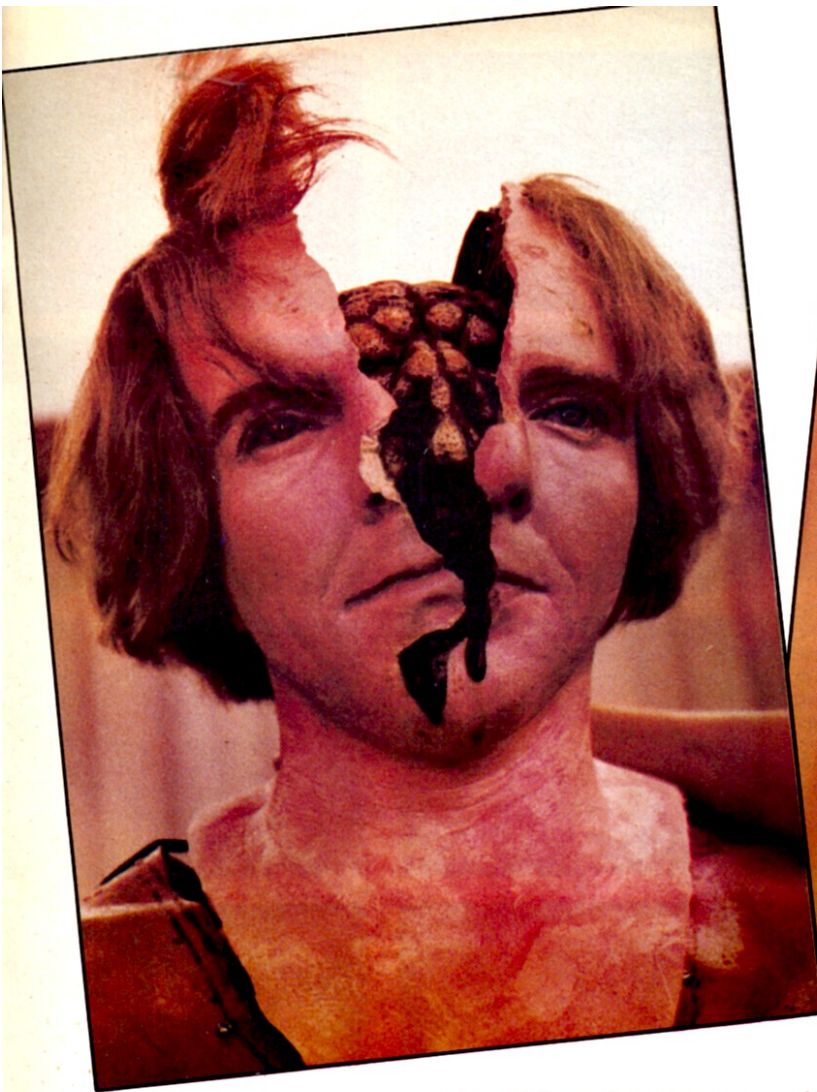


time to rig, it was accomplished in only three takes and is gruesomely realistic. It made for a happy interlude before the crew was to run into yet more problems once they left Bronson Canyon and returned to Raleigh Studios.

To try and save money while providing a sense of heightened realism, Russell and Ruben had wanted to shoot the "Buddy" dream, the little boy's nightmare, on location.

"We found an old Victorian house and were actually shooting," said Russell. "We realized that by the time you put in the lightning and thunder, it was going to look like Vincent Price was going to come around the corner. It was too on the nose, too traditional. We asked Jeff Stags, our art director, to do something different. He came up at the last minute with the idea of a forced perspective set, sort of Dr. Caligari style. It was a small set, but much more effective, as well as inexpensive. Buddy's dream is really my favorite because it has much more impact, even though it's not as spectacular as the last dream."

The "Buddy" dream completed the bulk of the main shooting. DREAMSCAPE moved from the largest soundstage at Raleigh into one small stage for what was hoped would be the final shot of the



production.

The set-up was a miniature shot, the only one that Peter Kuran's VCE facility was not doing. A rented snorkel camera was being used to represent the President's point of view in a dream. The camera travels through a ruined city past gutted buildings and streets thick with shards of glass and an overturned car, moving into a doorway and down a hall and stairs where the President would hear cries on the other side of a door. The miniature shot would end there,

cutting quickly in the darkness to a live action shot where Albert opens the door and is attacked by mutant children.

The snorkel camera resembled a cross between a crane and an unfolding jungle gym. Hand operated, not computer controlled, the camera afforded a view of what was being filmed on a small black & white television monitor. Ruben could only see the camera's POV, and had to be careful not to give instructions that would send the tiny mirror housing on the camera,

skimming an inch above the surface of the model, crashing into a pile of glass or one of the model buildings.

Instead of the smoke cinematographer Brian Tufano normally used, a different type was employed; small cakes of solid fuel were put on a platter, lit, and fanned as they gave off billowing clouds of smoke. When the cakes were lit, off to the side of the 20-foot-square miniature, a huge burst of flame shot up. Everyone looked up from the camera monitors and froze, trying to

decide whether to make a run for it, or save the miniature.

It took several takes before Ruben felt he had one that was good. For insurance, several additional takes were made at various camera speeds to provide alternates just in case. At last, about ten in the evening, after an exhausting and frustrating day spent setting up the shot, the crew stopped and wearily toasted each other. Late and over-budget, the principal photography on DREAMSCAPE was now finished, or so they thought.



Left: Special makeup supervisor Craig Reardon poses with the nearly finished clay sculpt of the Tommy Ray Snakeman. **Right:** One of the freshly painted, finished latex heads. After rushing to finish the head after a scheduling change moved up the filming date, Reardon's work was later replaced with cuts of a stop-motion animated puppet.

THE CLIMACTIC TRANSFORMATION

"Forget that it wasn't convincing on film. When I saw it, I just realized that we needed a more shocking effect."

**Joe Ruben,
director**

About a month earlier, in late June, Reardon had supplied a transformation head, known as a "change-o" head in the business, for a scene late in the film in which Dennis Quaid confronts political schemer Christopher Plummer in the one place where Plummer is vulnerable, inside Plummer's own dream. Quaid borrows a trick from dream assassin David Patrick Kelly and changes into his own version of the Snakeman before killing Plummer. The effect was planned to first show Quaid's head beginning to change, cut back to Plummer as the Snakeman's hands shoot out for his throat (a very brief scene which was shot earlier) then a quick cut back to Dennis Quaid's Snakeman head coming for the camera.

"We prepared a head, which I felt was better than a lot of THE HOWLING heads," said Reardon. "We didn't content ourselves with just having the face bulge out. We had the eyes blink, and when they opened they were snake eyes. At the same time the neck elongated and the cheeks distended, and the eyes began to pop out of their sockets. The mouth opens unnaturally wide and the teeth elongate. But nobody liked it. Ruben said to me, 'Geez Reardon, I expected something like AMERICAN WERE-WOLF IN LONDON.' That's great. You give me six months and six hundred thousand dollars and maybe you could get that. Besides, that effect was *five different* heads. I told them all along that I was only going to come up with one head and do as much with it as I could."

"I think that head was the best example of a learning experience for me," said Russell. "Craig [Reardon] delivered exactly what we talked about, and when we saw it on film, we realized it wasn't right."

There had already been two transformations earlier in the film and a different effect was desired that would still be similar enough to the first two so that people

Craig Reardon sculpts the first in a series of six-inch miniature heads that changed actor David Patrick Kelly into a Snakeman. Below: The finished, painted heads.





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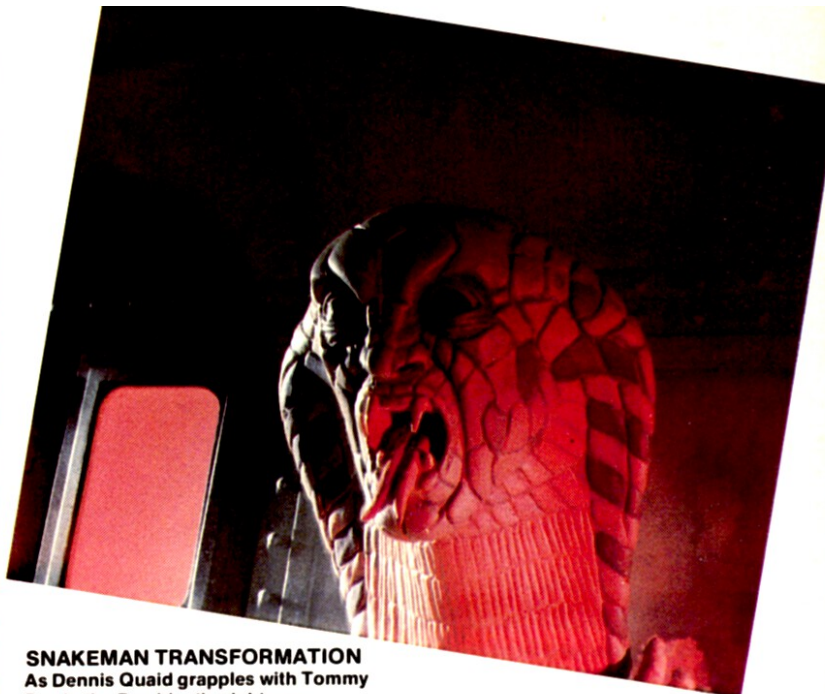
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SLAKEMAN TRANSFORMATION

As Dennis Quaid grapples with Tommy Ray in the President's nightmare, the dream assassin miraculously changes into the dreaded Snakeman. Shown are 29 of 32 replacement animation heads sculpted and painted by makeup artist Craig Reardon to create the effect. Reardon meticulously matched each head by eye to the ones preceding and following, sculpting alterations on heads made from three basic stage casts. Peter Kuran's VCE company lit and photographed the shot, the first such use of replacement animation in special effects history.

would grasp what was happening. Because Quaid's strike against Plummer was to be a surprise, Ruben and Russell felt it was absolutely necessary to make sure that the lighting look realistic right up to the moment of the attack. This meant shooting the effect not with lighting that would highlight the makeup, but with ordinary florescent lighting. Reardon hated the lighting, but went along with Ruben's insistence that changing the lighting would tip-off people that something was about to happen.

Neither Russell nor Ruben had been happy with the head when Reardon had brought it in. Under the flat lighting of the elevator mockup, the hair looked too bushy and stiff, the face too lifeless, and the neck far thicker than Quaid's. The head didn't work well either, with eyes that frequently jammed as they started to roll up. It took several takes to get the mechanism to work right. But beyond that, when Ruben and Russell saw footage of the effect, they realized that what they thought would be a good visual just wasn't that exciting.

"Forget that it wasn't convincing on film," Ruben said. "When I saw it, I just realized that we needed a more shocking effect."

"It wasn't exciting enough," added Russell. "We didn't realize that until we saw it. It was a subtle effect that just wasn't explosive enough. Craig's head didn't show

anything either that would connect it with the Snakeman, and we decided we needed that, so we racked our brains and decided on something simple, like a guy's head ripping apart with the Snake-man's head coming out of the pieces."

Russell contacted Reardon, but by this time, Reardon was both fed up with the production and busy trying to finish the replacement animation for David Patrick Kelly's Snakeman transformation so he could be done with the film. Since Reardon was busy, Russell had to find someone who could do the effect and do it quickly. He decided on Greg Cannom, a former assistant to Rick Baker and Rob Bottin. (Cannom did all the bladder makeup effects work on THE HOWLING.) Cannom's first solo assignment was THE SWORD AND THE SORCERER, and more recently he assisted Baker with the apes for GREYSTOKE.

Cannom had talked with Russell about a year before DREAMSCAPE about another film project that never went through. Cannom was interested in the assignment, but checked with Craig Reardon first, before committing himself. Reardon gave his blessing. Cannom went into his workshop and tried an effect which would combine the two concepts that Russell discussed, creating a skull that would not only split apart, but split apart and turn into a monster at the same time. "I could see the use of the Snakeman with the kid's nightmare, but going into an adult's nightmare, I thought it should be a lot more horrendous and scary," said Cannom.

Cannom's first prototype makeup was deemed unacceptable by producer Bruce Cohn Curtis. It was a bitter decision because of the amount of effort Cannom had put into it. Cannom took a fiberglass skull which he cut and hinged so it



The miniature set used by James R. Aupperle to film the basement struggle between Dennis Quaid and the Snake-man using stop-motion models. Insets: Low-key, atmospheric lighting made substitution of the animated characters believable. The live-action boy (bottom), wielding an axe, was composited in the scene by VCE using bluescreen. Assisting Aupperle on the animation chores for the film were Ernest D. Farino, Pete Kozachik and Linda Obalil.

could be pulled apart. Inside the skull, Cannom used a soft foam and sculpted a hideous face so that when the skull was pulled apart, the jaw would drop down and the foam face would come out to form the monster.

"I loved Cannom's first approach," said associate producer Chuck Russell. "I think it was terrific. The dangerous thing about the makeup was that in a very quick cut, with a man splitting his head open and something gooey, dark, and spongy coming out, it might look like brains. It was hard to argue for it because of that."

Curtis told Cannom that they wanted something closer to Reardon's Snake-man concept. Cannom tried to figure out how to fit Reardon's Snake-man design into a

reworked version of the splitting skull but finally gave up and settled for a two-piece approach. Cannom first built a small, embryonic Snake-man head which would be moved like a hand puppet inside the skull after it split apart. Cannom wanted to stop the camera and replace the small head with a full-sized but slimmer Snake-man head that would rise out of the neck and lunge for the camera dripping goo and skin. As with Reardon before him, Cannom was less than happy with the treatment he felt his makeup got from Ruben and Curtis. Assisted by Jill Rocklow, Kevin Yagher and Brian Wade, Cannom did the effect, but felt little enthusiasm for the final product.

"Bruce Cohn Curtis and the other producer, Jerry Tokofsky,

were so insulting and rude to me it was incredible," said Cannom. "It was like they already had something against me and wanted to find fault. I never want to see Bruce Cohn Curtis again."

"I don't really think my effect works either," added Cannom. "It's not done the way we wanted to set it up. We were very careful about it. First, the skull would split apart, then we would cut away, put the snake creature back into the neck and put skin all around it, and then have it come at the camera. I spent hours getting the chicken skins for the makeup and preparing them, then setting-up the effect. Ruben looked at it and said, 'That's not what I want. No neck and no skin. I just want the head coming at the camera.' I told him that didn't

make any sense! But that's what he wanted, so we did it his way."

It was now fall of 1983. With Cannom's effects in the can, the live action photography on DREAMSCAPE finally came to an end. Except for stints at Raleigh Studios supervising blue screen work, Peter Kuran had stayed holed-up inside the maze of corridors and equipment-laden rooms at VCE.

Kuran and his people had already been working most of the summer on the special effects for DREAMSCAPE only to find themselves being asked to do more and more as the live action footage was finally being assembled. Ruben and Russell were getting a better idea of what worked, what didn't, and what would be needed to help

Post holocaust faces sculpted by Craig Reardon for the ghouls encountered by the President during his trolley-ride through a ruined Washington DC at the end of the film. Right: A dead granny. Left: A post-nuclear girl and boy. Reardon sculpted six of twelve trolley-car ghouls seen in the film. To save time during filming, the makeups were fabricated as foam rubber masks to be slipped on and off easily on the set.





Animator James R. Aupperle

improve the flow of the picture. Aupperle had already been asked to do a couple more stop-motion cuts which he was doing at David Stipes' studio in the San Fernando valley. Russell checked in with Kuran at VCE as often as he could, but otherwise VCE was being left alone to create the effects, which suited Kuran just fine.

At a budget of over \$300,000 for some 90-odd cuts, DREAMSCAPE was one of the largest jobs VCE had taken on, as well as one of the most difficult. As the producers were continually asking VCE to create more or make changes with what they had done, Kuran wasn't under pressure to have all the special effects done by the original deadline.

Kuran pretty much improvises his effects as he goes along. The more they wanted him to do, the less certain he was about how much longer it would actually take to finish the effects. One thing was certain. There was no way they'd be able to get the movie out in the fall as Russell had originally hoped.

In a way though, the delays had been a good thing; something everyone was almost afraid to acknowledge because of all the tribulations the film had gone through. Kuran was creating the effects layer by layer, and even with only early tests to show, the effects still looked very good. It helped convince Curtis that even though the schedule and budget had gone to hell—it was still within limits he could work with—he was getting a better product for his money than he ever dreamed possible. The more Kuran tinkered with the visuals, the better they got. The live action footage of the actors had come out better than expected, too. Quaid and Von Sydow were marvelous in their roles, and if they could just get the effects to come out anywhere near what had been described in the script, they all

began to feel they might have a movie yet, even if they did have to grimace a bit when they realized that the work on the film was still far from over.

POST-PRODUCTION EFFECTS WORK

"When somebody makes a movie, they make a little mistake here, a little mistake there. They just kind of throw the shit over their shoulders, and it lands on them in post-production."

Peter Kuran,
visual effects

Working with Zupnik-Curtis productions was not without its problems for Kuran in the beginning. Because Curtis had never worked with special effects before, he wasn't sure what to expect.

"We started getting pressure from them early on," said Kuran. "They had a rough cut of some of the sequences for us to work from, and they wanted to see something. But they kept changing the cutting without realizing that it meant we'd have to go back and redo the whole scene. There was a trolley shot that they wanted to make longer by one foot of film. At that point, all the backgrounds had been shot to length. All the miniatures had been broken down. I managed to talk them out of that one."

Another problem is the very nature of post-production work.

"When somebody does a movie, they make a little mistake here and a little mistake there, and if it doesn't work, they just kind of throw the shit over their shoulders and it lands on them in post-production," said Kuran. "Unfortunately, this is where we do most of our work. People are at their worst to deal with in post-production. They're under deadlines, and if the movie doesn't work they're in even worse shit. The people who shot the movie are gone and they usually refuse to accept the fact that the movie is crummy because of them. Lots of people can go onto a production and create a lot of shit and come off smelling like a rose because the movie's not finished when they leave it."

Although VCE was contributing some 90 cuts to the film, the majority of the effects were going to be clustered around the holocaust dream near the end, and at the start, including the terrific A-bomb teaser which opens the film.

"I thought the bombs in THE DAY AFTER just didn't look right," said Kuran. "They looked so dark and cold. You look at a nuclear test and you can see it's a very bright fireball, so we wanted a very hot look to our bomb."

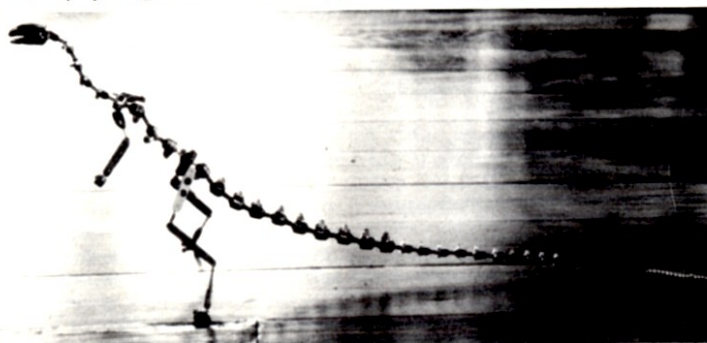
For the holocaust dream at the end, Kuran's basic effects strategy was to have a live-action foreground element, an intermediate miniature behind that, and then have a matte or tinted water tank shot as the background. The scenes were difficult because Kuran needed something that would convey a sense of extremely large scale while still having realistic detail, a tall order on the show's tight budget.

Russell had originally wanted to do the holocaust effects scenes first and rear-project them as they were shooting the live action. Kuran pointed out that it would take thousands and thousands of feet of film to try and generate the footage they would need, and that they would have a better chance of making sure the background footage matched with the live-action trolley car if they shot the trolley first and then had it to play the backgrounds against.

"Jim Belohovek and Sue Turner built the miniatures for the scenes, and we photographed them in different layers," said Kuran. "To get good depth of field, we shot them at one frame per second. Then we started adding the fires. Because those had to be slowed down, we shot them at 72 frames a second. We don't have any motion control equipment. I set up a dolly for the camera, filled the room with smoke, then lit the fires. It takes a couple of seconds to get the camera up to speed. Then we pushed the dolly down the tracks until I eventually timed the push right and got it to look the same speed that we thought the trolley would be moving at. The background is a water tank shot that we used to make it look moody by adding some glows and fires. Counting everything I'd say there's about 20 elements in that shot."

Gradually, VCE generated the bits and pieces that would help add life and highlights to the live action effects. A red glow was added to the mutant dog's eyes, as well as crawling purple electrical effects when the dogs vanish. Optical materialized David Patrick Kelly's nunchaka weapons smoothly into

Steve Czerkas sculpted the stop-motion puppet of the Snakeman in clay around a modified human armature (left), to be cast in latex and painted. The producers insisted on making the puppet more lizard-like, which resulted in the live action makeup by Craig Reardon intercutting poorly with the stop-motion footage. The makeup was all but eliminated in the final cut.





HIGH STEEL VERTIGO in Dennis Quaid's dream about being a high-rise construction worker was enhanced by the surreal, racing cloud forms added by VCE. **Top Right:** The sky as it appeared in the original photography. **Bottom Right:** An element of the wispy dry ice clouds that were added, filmed against black velvet. Kuran exposed the negative of the clouds with yellow light onto the negative of the original scene. The black negative of the clouds held back the light so the clouds appear white, while the clear section of the cloud negative passed through the yellow light, turning that portion of the scene blue, the color opposite of yellow. The result was striking white cloud forms in a blue sky.

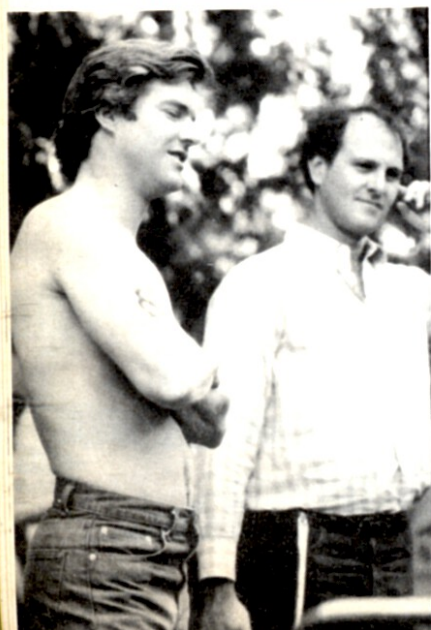
his hands as well as allowed Dennis Quaid to heal his wounds and transform himself into Kelly's father.

Opticals were also used to create the clouds and background sky for the first dream that Quaid enters, the vertigo dream where he goes into the mind of a steelworker and falls.

"There's one shot where Dennis Quaid is supposed to be falling," said Kuran. "I spent some time trying to figure out how a person should fall so it will look right on film. We had a good plate of a falling background, and they rigged an elaborate harness at Raleigh to hold Dennis. When we were on the set, Ruben asked me how a person should fall, and I went through the motions of what Dennis should do, but Joe didn't do that. He told Dennis to do something else that looks really corny. He ruined the shot. There was no way that I could think of to fix it and I think it looks really cheesy right now.

"I'm actually kind of a wimp when it comes to somebody telling me something," added Kuran. "I tend to agree with whatever they

Dennis Quaid, the psychic dream warrior of **DREAMSCAPE**, and director Joe Ruben during location filming.



say. If someone tells me it could be better, I generally say 'Yeah, it could be better,' which is how budgets go up. Then there are times when I think something is okay, and they don't. But they're the ones who are paying the bills so you have to respect what they say, at least that's what I keep telling myself."

FINAL EDITING

"I think I will go to my grave saying this: a man in a suit will always look like a man in a suit. You just can't show anybody walking around in one."

Chuck Russell,
associate producer

While Kuran labored in the bowels of VCE, director Ruben and Academy Award winning editor Richard Halsey were slowly cutting the film together using unfinished optical tests that were the right length and Jim Aupperle's Snakeman animation. Kuran had been able to find them an east coast underground filmmaker named Dennis Pies (pronounced "pees") to do the Dream Tunnel effects and the stuff looked wonderful. It was exactly what they wanted. But now it was time to decide how they were going to mix the live action Snakeman and the animation, and to a great degree, they were coming down against the live action footage.

Said Russell, "I think I will go to my grave saying this: a man in a suit will always look like a man in a suit. It works only if you use it in tight close-ups. I think **ALIEN** is the best example of a man in a suit used well. When a man starts moving, you instinctively recognize the movement of a human and not a monster. Craig [Reardon] had a wonderful suit, but you just can't show anybody walking around in one for very long. The details of it are what is effective and frightening. The shot of Larry Cedar, the

stuntman who wore the costume, coming through the window in Buddy's dream is effective, I think. You can't see much of the suit. With the lighting and the glass shattering, I think it works."

Reardon's final effect for the production involved the climactic transformation of David Patrick Kelley into the Snakeman as he struggles with Dennis Quaid. "I wanted to show a man changing all the way into a terrifying monster without any blinking or editing cheats, and in sharp, surreal focus," said Reardon. "The only way to achieve this was through replacement animation, where a separate head is made for each stage of the transformation."

Reardon wanted to make 48 different three-inch heads, using one per frame for a two second transformation shot. A cast from a mold of each stage would be made, on which the next stage would be sculpted. Because Reardon was doing all the work himself, he had to compromise.

"I made ten to fifteen casts of one stage out of one mold," said Reardon. "Then I would alter them all together, at once, matching each to the other by eye. I wound up having to do the change with only 32 heads, which significantly speeded up the effect."

Reardon shot a quick video test of the unpainted heads because the producers were anxious to add the shot to the print so they could shop the film for a distributor. According to Reardon, associate producer Chuck Russell felt the test looked too much like animation, and instructed Peter Kuran to double-frame each head, adding lap dissolves at each stage.

"That decision ruined the effect I was seeking," said Reardon. "It made the transformation reminiscent of the old Larry Talbot Wolf Man transformations. Doubling the frames had the effect of allowing the mind to grasp and perceive each individual static pose. The shot was also printed down so dark that you can hardly see it. And they used the heads to reverse the transformation too. Because they wanted

him to reverse slower, you see a lot more strobing. I was completely demoralized by what was done to my work."

The November finish date that Kuran had hoped to meet came and went; in mid-December, 11 months after the film had begun production, post-production photography was finally finished. Both Kuran and Curtis were happy with what they had.

Because Ruben and Halsey had been able to do much of the editing work while the final opticals were being generated, the final scoring and assembly of the footage was completed quickly. Curtis had a finished film only a month later and premiered it to his friends in mid-January at a small mixing theater in Hollywood. Although there were some clunky spots that hadn't been fixed because of time and budgetary problems, the final cut was deftly edited around most of them and they were visible only if you knew what to look for. The audience gave the film a big hand and Curtis was very happy, as well as Kuran, Russell, Ruben and Loughery, who now looked forward to having a potential hit associated with their names. Although Craig Reardon liked the film, he was still unhappy with director Ruben.

Ruben defended his decision to replace Reardon's work. "Craig was under tremendous pressure to deliver an awful lot of complicated physical effects," said Ruben. "I wouldn't be able to see a finished physical effect practically until the day we were ready to shoot it. That was a rough way for both of us to work. I was disappointed sometimes, and I'm sure he was disappointed in the way I was shooting things, although at no time can I remember him making specific suggestions. I think that the main thing I would change if I were to do it again, and I wouldn't mind working with Craig again, would be to subcontract more of the work."

Despite the disagreement, the important thing to Curtis was that the film was finished. Now he hoped he could get the film into the market in the spring ahead of the glut of blockbuster genre movies that would start showing in mid-

KURAN

continued from page 27

Peter Ellenshaw and saw how they ran their optical printers; this theoretical study program was only supposed to run one day a week for one semester. I think I wound up going three or four times a week for a year before someone at Disney figured I wasn't actually working there and should be in school instead. They told me the unions were getting upset about me and I should go back to school."

Star Wars

Kuran went back to Cal Arts, but his second year didn't last long at all. A friend from school, Michael Ross, got a job offer from DePattie-Freleng Studios after only one semester and went to work for them at their Van Nuys facility in the smoggy San Fernando valley, a half hour to the south of Cal Arts. Only a few streets over from DePattie-Freleng was an effects studio that had been hastily assembled to produce movie special effects. Ross switched to working there and told Kuran that it looked like it could use more people. The place had an intriguing name, Industrial Light and Magic, and Kuran hurried over to meet with John Dykstra. It was almost a meeting that ended his career before it began.

"I showed him a demo reel I had put together very quickly, and I remember that the cement splices kept falling apart every time I'd try and run it through the projector. I'd start running it and the film would break, and I'd thread it again and the film would break again. I don't think Dykstra was very impressed, but I told him that I was willing to work a week for free, and I remember seeing a sparkle in his eye when he heard that, and he said all right, they would try me out for a week."

Quite by accident, Kuran, who was only 18 years old, had stumbled upon STAR WARS, one of the most extraordinary opportunities effects people had ever been given.

L O R D O F L I G H T • P E T E R K U R A N

"I don't think John Dykstra was impressed with me. But then I told him that I was willing to work a week for free, and I remember seeing a sparkle in his eye when he heard that. He said he'd try me for a week."

Kuran started in, inking and taping laser beams to be optically added over existing footage. But Kuran brought something from his stay at Cal Arts. "I realized, looking at the footage, that there wasn't any perspective on the lasers. My first effort was to work on them at night because nobody was willing to let me do it. It was just something I decided I better start doing, and after a week went by, they realized they needed me and kept me on."

Kuran's strategy was to find jobs within the rotoscoping and animation department that nobody else wanted to do. He started doing optical reflections, a time-consuming, meticulous task that kept him safely squirreled away and working while battles over schedules and budgets raged between George Lucas and Dykstra until Lucas essentially deposed Dykstra and took control of ILM himself.

"When the effects topped the \$1 million mark, all the executives at Fox, except Alan Ladd, Jr., wanted nothing more than to shut the project down. When the film was almost finished the executives started coming around in their suits to be photographed next to the equipment with Lucas and to say how much they were for it from the beginning."

When STAR WARS was finished, ILM shut down and Kuran was laid off. He thought it would be relatively simple to find a job with the experience and screen credit from the film, but found otherwise.

Kuran had come to the notice of STAR WARS producer Gary Kurtz though, and although Kurtz couldn't get him an effects job, he tried to help Kuran as much as he could. Kuran found himself making some money on the other side of the cam-

era as a real-life C-3PO.

"Once in awhile Kurtz would feel sorry for his unemployed special effects people. He gave me jobs getting crammed inside the C-3PO suits doing promotional stunts that Tony Daniels didn't want to do. I was in *Vogue* magazine dressed as C-3PO hanging on the arms of a couple of models who were draped in mink."

In the meantime, Dykstra had recovered from his ouster by Lucas, formed his own company and was set to do the special effects for the pilot of ABC's projected space opera, BATTLESTAR GALACTICA. Dykstra called Kuran and asked him to come to work in the rotoscope animation department. Kuran accepted with high hopes for the effects, only to discover that the network had a more prosaic view of what constituted effects.

"The network sat down with us and said, look, we're not really looking for improvements on this particular show. What we're looking for is speed. There was a lot of pressure on us just to crank things out. The more we would crank things out, the more frustrating it became. I was interested in experimenting and trying new things. After awhile, I started to enhance shots they didn't want me to do at all. They realized I was doing some interesting stuff, but it wasn't going to show up on the screen because it was too subtle. I was told to stop doing it."

The pilot for BATTLESTAR GALACTICA sold and Dykstra asked Kuran to stay on, but Kuran had tired of working on projects where he wasn't allowed to do the best he thought he could do. Kuran wanted to find a project where he would be in charge of his effects

from start to finish. He didn't have a clear idea of how much it would cost to do something like that, but he knew that in Hollywood, you always say you can do the job first, then figure out how it's done later. Kuran got his chance with THE DARK, a low-budget monster film a producer wanted to jazz up with some

cheap opticals.

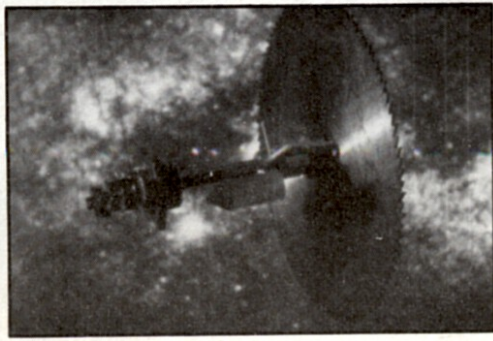
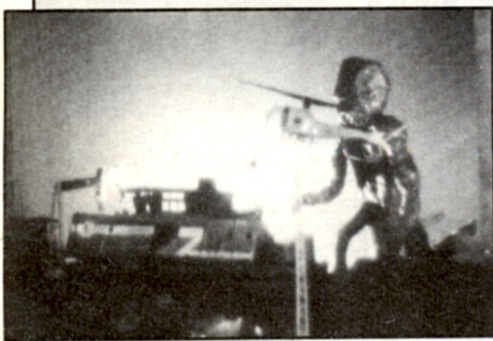
"THE DARK was really a piece of junk. The only reason I did it was because I could follow through with the effects from beginning to end. I felt that something I really needed was more hands-on experience working with opticals. The producer showed me the final reel which was this stupid monster blowing up a lot of cops. I thought it had been photographed well and that I could do something with it.

"I was totally oblivious to costs though. You really don't get an idea about costs until you've done it a few times. I remember asking people what I should charge for this stuff and somebody told me \$6000—I think whoever told me that was even more oblivious to costs than I was. I got the job and the producer gave me \$6000. I thought it was a lot of money at the time. He gave me the money not because he thought I would do the best job, but because I was so cheap. He told me—now I wonder how he kept a straight face—that my bid had been high but he wanted to go with me anyway. Later I found out that the next cheapest bid on the effects had been twice what I asked."

Kuran finally had his first freelance assignment, but there was one small problem; he had no equipment. Details, details. Kuran wangled the use of GALACTICA's animation camera, and found a friend who was building his own optical printing facility.

"I would work on the animation at my own place, then photograph it with the GALACTICA camera, then run around to the film labs and get the various other elements I needed. My friend, Dave McCue, would composite the stuff and print it. I was learning optical

THE AMATEUR KURAN started filming productions while in grade school, inspired by a copy of Famous Monsters magazine. Left: THE SPECTRE OF TIME, filmed in Super 8mm at age 9, featured a monster that arrived via time machine. The monster had two tails, to keep from tipping over. Middle: THE DOOMSDAY MACHINE, filmed in 16mm at age 14. Kuran developed the film in his mom's bathtub and dried it with her hair dryer. The spaceship is a buzz saw with a rear-projected background. Right: SLIME, filmed in 16mm inside the corridors of Kuran's high school in New Jersey, at age 15. A scientist discovers a poisonous bread mold.



“Richard Edlund asked me to run the animation department at ILM. I soon discovered the department was just an empty room. They handed me a hammer and told me to build what I needed. That’s how I started work on THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK.”

printing as I went along.”

After *THE DARK*, Kuran did some additional work on *BATTLESTAR GALACTICA*, and shot the fish of the title in Joe Dante’s *PIRANHA*. He was beginning to establish himself. Then came *THE DAY TIME ENDED* [see *TIME WARP* 8:2/8:3:76 and 8:4:30], an early Charles Band low-budgeter.

“It was made for six hundred thousand dollars, in cinemascope. My total budget for 70 shots was \$10,000. That was really ridiculous. I rented space in a building in MacArthur Park and did the animation myself. I would stay up the night before I had to go in and shoot to practice by flipping the cells. I was paying \$27 an hour and since I was watching the money being eaten up, I realized I had to pick up the pace. Basically every shot was shot once and that was it.”

The Empire Strikes Back

By the time Kuran finished the effects, he was dead broke. He needed another job quickly and wasn't going to be picky about it. The Force was with young Kuran though, for the next person who called was Richard Edlund, and he had a proposition.

“He called me from ILM and said they were getting a facility together up there in San Rafael and asked if I was interested in running the animation department. I didn't have much choice because I was out of money. I went up there and discovered that their animation department was an empty room. They claimed they didn't have the money to hire carpenters. They handed me a hammer and told me to build what I needed, so I started building all the shelving units and animation desks myself until they finally got some money for carpenters. That's how I started work on *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*.”

Even though Kuran had returned to the folds of ILM, neither he nor the organization was the same as in the heyday of *STAR WARS*. Although only 22, Kuran had done something that many ILMers had only dreamed about; he had started his own effects company which he called Visual Concept Engineering. He had even hired some help of his own to work on effects for *GALAXINA* while he was north working on *EMPIRE*. Despite



ABOUT VCE

Although we have used the terms “VCE” and “Kuran” interchangeably in this article, in fact Visual Concept Engineering (VCE) is not just Peter Kuran, but a group of highly talented people who share Kuran's enthusiasm for the genre. To make sure those associated with VCE received their due credit, Kuran provided a list of key collaborators, both past and present.

Jim Belohovek, heads VCE's model department; Beverly Bernacki, runs VCE's optical department; Layne Bourgoyne, production assistant, inking and painting; Steve Burg, airbrush artist and animator; Chris Casady, former long-time collaborator since *STAR WARS*; Colette Emanuel, optical department; R.J. “Randy” Robertson, articulate rotoscoping, now co-writing *THE SWORDSMAN* with Kuran; Susan Turner, model work and animation; Bruce Woodside, free-lance animator; Jackie Zeitlow, bookkeeper.

Additional information about the work of these artists and others, can be found in the numerous articles about the work of Peter Kuran and VCE we have published since *STAR WARS* (6:4:19), referenced by volume, issue, and page number throughout this article.

The cover photo of Kuran (above) was designed by Kuran and created at VCE, employing the techniques used in their film effects work. Steven Burke painted the bomb; the demons were elements from VCE's work on *CONAN, THE BARBARIAN*; the seismic cracks and glows were straight animation inking and painting, with diffusion. Kevin Kutchaver photographed the composite image, combining 15 elements on a 4x5 transparency, reduced from 8x10.

these achievements, Kuran still found that he was facing an uphill battle in winning respect from ILM.

“I don't think anybody up there took me seriously. I was the youngest supervisor there. Instead of driving a BMW like everyone else, I drove a moped. I was trying to save money so I could put it back into the company I was trying to keep going down in Los Angeles, and it wasn't easy. During the week I would work on *EMPIRE*, then each weekend, I took a bus down to Los Angeles to help keep VCE going.”

Kuran was also frustrated to find himself running into resistance at ILM over his department's special effects. Kuran wanted a chance to experiment with the look of the opticals, but was stymied by the way ILM processed its footage and he didn't have the clout to have the processing changed.

“I wanted the animation elements in *EMPIRE* printed in a better way. The animation was generally shot against a black background, and then reshot from a positive color print. This kept me from having the ability to change the color values and make the animation elements more subtle because the film stock keeps you from being able to manipulate the color values; it's either there or not there, and while you could get a nice look on something as long as the element was by itself, after it was printed into a shot, it usually lost subtlety, brightened, and looked like hell. It was a little frustrating.”

Despite Kuran's disagreements with his ILM superiors, he was offered the chance to stay with the company after *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK* was finished. The offer was a good one, but it both surprised and disheartened Kuran.

“After *EMPIRE* was over, they said basically that I could stay on for the summer on salary. This was at a time when they didn't even have any projects they were thinking of for the future. They said, look, stay on here, everybody likes to get paid for doing nothing; and I said, no I'm a jerk. I don't like getting paid for doing nothing. I'd like to go down to Los Angeles and try to find some work, even though I'll probably make a fraction of what I'm making up here. I think once I said that, I was dead at ILM.

continued on page 57

May. Curtis shopped the picture around, even showing the film to Walt Disney executives as a possible Touchstone Films Release. Curtis got a lot of positive comments, but no deal... time was slipping by.

Finally, in April, a deal was struck that made all the waiting worthwhile. *DREAMSCAPE* had been picked up for major release by 20th Century-Fox, which had been looking for a youth-oriented science fiction film. That still left open the problem of when to release the picture for maximum return. Curtis still wanted to open the film as quickly as possible, while Ruben and Russell argued for a later release date. Fox decided with Curtis and set the tentative release date for May 11.

POSTMORTEM

“I think that dealing with special effects people is an acquired taste.”

Bruce Cohn Curtis,
producer

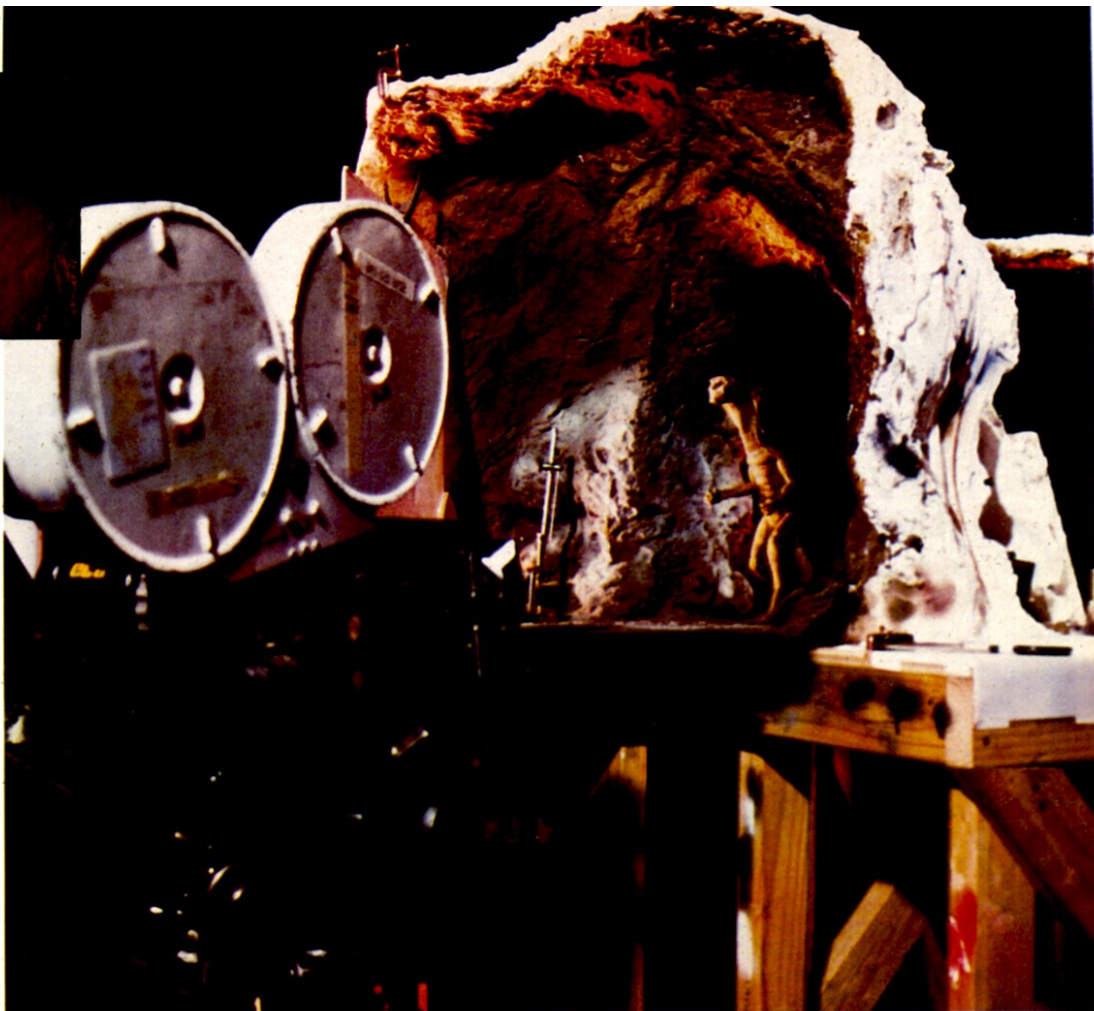
A rapprochement was effected between Curtis and Reardon by Peter Kuran, and the two embarked on a publicity tour showing a full cut of the film to exhibitors and a 20 minute demo reel to science fiction conventions to drum up interest. At the conventions, Reardon's name was a guaranteed draw, and for the first time in the production, he was not just an employee, but the star.

“I wish Bruce [Curtis] and I had more of a chance to talk before the production began,” said Reardon. “Bruce was basically interfacing through his corporals. I wish he'd been in on the conversations more because he is an authority figure, who, if he hears the logic of something, can get behind it. I don't have the authority to tell a director what to do, and I don't have the desire to do that except on some things which I feel very strongly about. I deferred too much. Things weren't thought through. There were some generalized storyboards, but they weren't real firm shot-to-shot boards. When we shot the Snakeman grappling with Dennis, Joe [Ruben] didn't know what to do with it, and I would go off in the corner and mutter ‘silly son of a bitch’ to myself.”

Said Curtis with the air of someone who should know, “I think that dealing with special effects people is an acquired taste. I can see now that preparation is absolutely vital. You can't spend too much time preparing, and I'm a great believer in preparing for any film I make, but it just didn't happen on this one. We were being rushed to meet schedules. I didn't equate it at the time, but special effects are like stunts, and about stunts I say to the stuntman ‘You do it, you know



James R. Aupperle's miniature set-up used to film the stop-motion Snakeman scenes to be inserted into the holocaust dream sequence filmed at Bronson Canyon. Inset: The scene as it appears in the film. Above: Makeup assistant Bruce Kasson holds up the head of the live action Snakeman to provide a sight-line for Eric Gold, playing Tommy Ray's father, in a scene designed for the stop-motion Snakeman. Though a mixture of live-action makeup and post-production stop-motion effects were planned for the Snakeman, the makeup shots were for the most part abandoned in the editing.



best. You know how to get the stunt to work and you know where to put the camera.' When a director says, 'I know how to do stunts,' I say 'bullshit.' That's why I'm hiring the best stunt people I can, because they know how to do it.'

'It's the same thing with special effects. The technician's the authority. He's the one you're paying the bucks for. He knows how to get the effect to look the best, especially if the director hasn't done it before. Thank God everything came up right with this movie, but if I had to

do it again, I'd do it differently. I'd get everything set and ready to shoot beforehand. I don't care what it costs. It's still going to be less money than having a full crew sitting around.'

The success of the promotional tour and positive demographic studies by Fox led the studio to postpone the film's release until August, for more careful handling. Nudity was removed to win it a less-restrictive PG-13 rating. Backed by a heavy promotional campaign on shows like "Saturday Night

Live" and "Friday Night Videos," the film proved lackluster at the box-office, ranked sixth in revenue the week it opened, and fell steadily. Frustratingly, the film garnered good reviews from many publications and critics, including raves from Leonard Maltin and Pauline Kael, but the critical boost wasn't enough.

'The film is a success,' insists producer Bruce Cohn Curtis. 'It's opened in England and it's getting good reviews. It opens in Spain for Christmas and after that in France.

It's still playing here in America too. We've still got about 30 to 40 prints working and it's grossed about \$14 million, so we're close to going into the black on it.

'The video cassette will be out for Christmas,' continued Curtis. 'I understand that Fox is going to charge \$79 for it. I'm not happy about that. Sometime next year too, the film will be on cable—then a lot of people will discover it. Films never die. I think DREAMSCAPE will go on and be remembered in years to come.' □

Left: Visual effects supervisor Peter Kuran surveys the finishing touches put on the miniature trolley car set of bombed out Washington DC, erected at Raleigh Studios. Right: A miniature of the Capitol building constructed for the sequence by Kuran's VCE. The large blue screen was needed to add flaming water tank sky effects to the shots.



INDIANA JONES

and the

TEMPLE OF DOOM

A look at George Lucas's patented fantasy formula explains why this sequel falls far short of the original

by Allen Malmquist

Something old, something new, something borrowed—and a John Williams soundtrack. Exploration of this formula (George Lucas—patent pending) offers insight into the fruition of the mega-successful Star Wars trilogy. It also applies to INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM, more so in that this serial-sourced sequel, not being the second or third act of any grand scheme, creates a new whole in the shadow of a previous piece: Adding to RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK, *Indy's* "something new" makes for an exciting, gripping piece of cinematic flare—and the "something old" left out makes it nothing more.

What it is, is a separate adventure in the Bond tradition, with no plot connection to any other film: Shanghai 1935. Running from a Chinese hood, Dr. Jones and his exuberant young companion Short Round, saddled with a prissy screeching woman named Willie Scott, drop in on India. There they come upon a dying village, with tales of a stolen, magical—and archaeologically valuable—artifact, and children forced into slavery. This leads to the splendor of a Maharajah's temple. And below it, a magical cult dealing in mind control, lava sacrifice, and a deadly search for power. *Indy* decides to set things right.

Like its predecessor, INDIANA JONES sifts old style movie magic

through tongue-in-cheek humor, yet does so with enough reverence to capture the inherent energy. Case in point, the "Anything Goes" opening. This piece of Busby Berkeley-on-a-budget incorporates a laughable clash of cultures and a heart-stopping duel—and still succeeds simply as a production number.

This same duality runs through the film's action scenes. *Indy* at times simply substitutes detail out of RAIDERS—descent of a spiked roof rather than a rolling stone; a corridor of bugs rather than a pit of snakes—but more often its hero races here and there, swings from this to that, and battles his foes in a

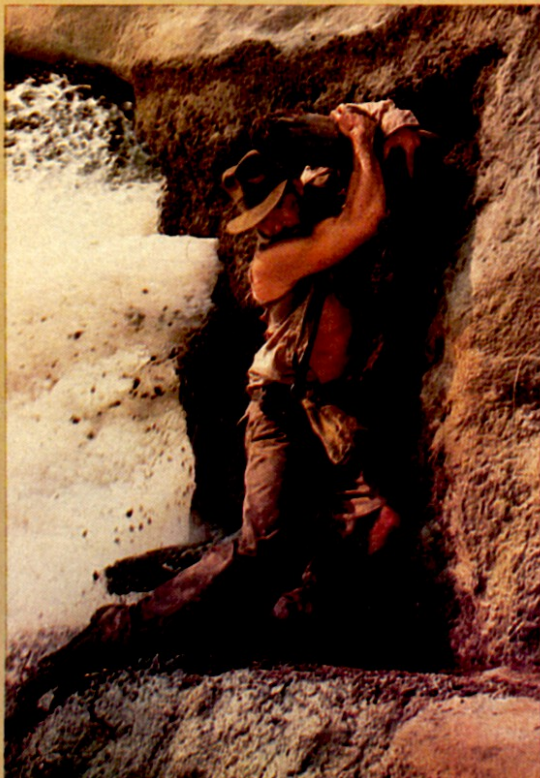
series of inventive adventures. And all of these ridiculous feats of derring-do bring not laughs, but smiles of surrender, as you get caught up in the excitement of it all.

Flashy movement accompanied by eye-catching visuals. These range from still set ups—the primary being a beautiful shot of Indiana Jones back lit in the misty mine tunnel, his stance a silhouette of defiance and heroics—to costumes—such as the deceptively smooth-faced maharajah in his rich attire, or Willie's characteristic yet foreign harem outfit—to sets, particularly the red hot, stone-carved worship cave.

Herein occurs the controversial scene which helped alter, slightly, our country's mesozoic ratings system: removal of a live victim's heart. Has Steven Spielberg, wunderkid of ET and CLOSE ENCOUNTERS, turned grotesque on us? Hardly. Told to imagine a live heart being ripped out, nine out of ten people would envision a scene with far more blood n' entrails than what appears in INDIANA JONES.

Because this scene was designed not to shock but to awe. And it does, the operative factor not being an organ-wrenching, but the magical force behind it, the mad-eyed priest holding high a beating heart, its owner living to face further tortures: an evil beyond even the Nazis; an evil beyond cruel reality and into the realm of nightmares. This is a scary

The climax of INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM is a cliff hanger, but the script's Saturday matinee approach leaves Harrison Ford dangling in developing the character.



movie. And this horrific element is *Indy's* "something new"—except for a brief foreshadowing in RAIDERS spiritual climax—which gives this prequel its own atmosphere and flare.

Spielberg always directs with flare, from camera angles to cuts, pacing to form of action. He can take good material and make it great. Poor material can become palatable; unimaginative bits like a character facing overwhelming odds with a plaintive "Shit" work because of the manner in which they're set up—and the actor's delivery.

But the actors do not get to go any deeper than this. Who is Indiana Jones? In this film he offers only two moods: undaunted cool, speckled with a few moments of comic panic. A little mystery never



hurt a hero, but these extremes, further confounded by the rugged adventurer/shy professor dichotomy of RAIDERS, never blend into an identifiable personality.

Do you know that more ancient obelisks now stand outside of Egypt than in it? One or two probably went by way of this raider's stealth. For Indiana Jones steals cultural artifacts. And the fact that he leaves one be at the end of TEMPLE OF DOOM only serves notice of the lack of character development throughout this RAIDERS prequel. An adventure film does not need such development, but when the hero starts out being a mercenary and ends up making a benevolent action, one which goes against his whole way of life, then between more development should be shown.

Willie Scott makes no pretense at

such evolution. From start to finish she follows, she complains; she's prissy, she's silly, she wants only creature comforts, she consistently requires saving, and wears skimpy outfits to boot. The one moment when she finally slugs a villain only emphasizes, especially with a kid who stands by Indy in each fracas, how absurdly actionless she has been throughout: to some, another harmless cardboard character; to others, a sexist stereotype.

Even Marion, RAIDERS' tougher heroine (or tomboy stereotype?)—needed Indy's protection. Indy protected her, cared for her, made love to her. The latter more at her request. For Indiana Jones stood aloof to sex. Even after the fact: Marion, naked as he is clothed, looks up at Indy with a girlish kind of "Thank you" smile; but his mind is not on

her, on their night together. His mind is elsewhere, concerned with more dramatic adventures.

In THE TEMPLE OF DOOM, Dr. Jones more actively seeks sex. But he does so on a purely physical level. For, though Willie Scott cuts an attractive figure, inside resides an unattractive cry baby; all the two have done is bicker, with no evidence of an underlying emotional attraction. The pair continue as, on the night of supposed body nuptials, he feigns disinterest and she plays the irresistible object; when he does return to her room, she sirens "Be gentle with me"—But his mind is elsewhere, concerned with more dramatic adventures.

More than a hero for adolescents, Indiana Jones is an adolescent hero. He plays life cool, which means not admitting to any great want or need;

THE TEMPLE OF DOOM of the title, and its ritual sacrifice, provides an element of the horrific, new to the series. The impressive set, designed by Elliot Scott, was built at Thorn-EMI Studios in Borehamwood, England.

his sexual yearnings appear as a young boy's awakening, biologically centered upon Woman as an object for fulfilling a drive, rather than as a human being with whom to share physical communication and delight—Not to mention the unconscious symbolism of Indy's snake fright, verses his final capturing of Willie via an extension of his whip—and she plays out this role.

Of course, what do you expect from a singer at the Club Obi-Wan? Club Obi-Wan? This apex of the growing Lucas-Spielberg self-reference pyramid conjures up images of a galaxy far, far away. This kind



THE PERILS OF INDY may look familiar. Exploring passages of Pankot Palace, Indy and Short Round (Ke Huy Quan) are trapped in a room bristling with spikes, as the ceiling slowly descends (left). Kay Aldridge as Nyoka, among others, faced the same dilemma (above) in **PERILS OF NYOKA**, a 1942 Republic serial.

of "out joke"—as opposed to an "in-joke" which only the filmmakers would understand—breaks the fantasy **TEMPLE OF DOOM**, or any other film, seeks to create.

Worse yet, the raft trip which brings our heroes to India: leaping with it as a parachute out of a plummeting plane, clunking inside of it upon snow, zipping down the mountainside at high speeds, and splashing safely into a roaring river. As anyone who reads film journals knows, this scene was cut out of the script for **RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK** specifically because it stretched the bounds of credulity. Someone decided, incorrectly, that this prequel could successfully stretch farther. Dragging along under a Nazi-driven truck, yes; dropping through multi-story awnings into a waiting car, yes; but this raft extravaganza snaps its bounds and flings over into unbelieveability. It is this same sort of impossible exploit which has helped deteriorate the James Bond series.

Fast paced sequences, improbable or not, can also mitosis into screentime domination: **INDIANA JONES** could use more of a story. After the Peruvian prelude in **RAIDERS**, our intrepid professor found out about the arks existence, set out after clues (the medallion), fought foe and friend for them, further on so too for his life, applied the clues (map room), made the discovery—meanwhile Marion had her own story—lost his discovery, fought for life again, and set out to recover the Ark, ending with two dramatic confrontations (gun over Nazis; final cosmic end). But the current prequel, after its China opening, simply has Indy told of an archaeological artifact,

travel to and stumble upon it, escape various traps, and beat up the villains.

This too may be why **INDY** seems more violent. In the first film, he spent more time using his wits in an archaeological hunt, and then chasing—albeit with violence—after "his" Nazi-stolen treasure. In India, the Professor basically slugs his way through obstacles in his path. It is this "something old," this more involved plot, which makes **RAIDERS** the superior film. Better in the prequel if Indiana Jones would slowly become involved with the village, witnessing a series of escalating events which suggest, if not magic, something unusual at work. He would then hunt down its source, suspecting something fishy beneath the Maharajah's hospitality, and come upon the same heart-stopping—or, rather, non-heart-stopping—

horror beneath the palace proper.

Here, characterization would take over, his switch from archaeological kleptomaniac to moral outrage growing as he sees his friend, Short Round, become a slave. The boy, once released: "Now we take care of that maharajah kid." Indy: "No, he's under the same spell I was." "Then we take stones and leave?" "No kid, I'm not under that spell any more either," tossing one stone in his hand, "We have work to do." Cut to his image in the slave tunnel. Additions to Indy's character transformation would make his final fight with Mola Ram, where he shouts "You betrayed Shiva" (i.e. used the stones for wrong) more logical.

And why not account for the missing talismans being mined for by the slaves? The two stones should have been worked into the story's climax; at least accounted

Short Round, Willie (Kate Capshaw) and Indy careen down a mineshaft in **THE TEMPLE OF DOOM**. Kinetic ore car chase scenes such as this were a staple of Republic serials in the forties, and served as the inspiration for this sequence.



for in a throwaway: as Indy, Willie, and Short Round struggle to grasp the cliffside, water bursts out of the mine shaft—and with it, two glowing stones tumbling to obscurity within the river below.

TEMPLE OF DOOM sets up many situations which it then fails to develop. Like the scenery: beautiful images of bats in flight, but why don't they come into the story's action? At least as sculptured symbols of the cult. Too few epic landscapes, and virtually nothing of Chinese and Indian culture; instead, an overlong, overwrought scene of food grotesque to the average American palate.

And music designed for said palate. For though John Williams delivers another fine score—except for an incongruous intro of the triumphant **RAIDERS** theme as Indy takes off in an enemy-controlled plane—the composer does not utilize enough Chinese and Indian music. These, attractive in and of themselves, would add to the exotic atmosphere of Dr. Jones's adventures and offer at least some inroad in cultural exploration. Still, it's a rousing score.

The whole film is rousing. It's just not anything more. An adventure film can dig deeper, into culture, into plot, into character, and still throw out as many thrills. If **RAIDERS** was a surface film, **INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM** is the venerable. And yet an attractive one at which to look. What it has to offer it offers well: through a marriage of throat-lumping terror and smile-inducing fun, **INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM** delivers; it delivers a spirited, exhilarating, intoxicating time at the ol' movie house. □

RAIDERS

of the Lost Serials

Steven Spielberg and George Lucas Plunder Republic

By Dan Scapperotti

INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM borrows heavily from the serials of the thirties and forties, most notably the impressive product turned out by Republic Pictures. Reportedly both executive producer and story author George Lucas and director Steven Spielberg researched copies of Jack Mathias' stunning *Valley of the Cliffhangers*, a massive history of the 66 chapter-plays produced at the studio, copies of which are selling for as high as \$700 each. Spielberg and Lucas, however, take the genre to lengths undreamed of by such veteran serial directors as William Whitney, John English and Spencer Bennet. Throughout TEMPLE OF DOOM there are homages to the chapter-plays which were featured prominently at traditional Saturday matinees, until the demise of the medium in 1956.

The grandiose Temple of Doom is more elaborate although no more functional than the temple of the TIGER WOMAN, a 1944 serial which featured Linda Stirling as the white leader of a jungle tribe. Transgressors in the Tiger Woman's domain met their fate suspended over a pit in the floor of her temple. The victims, hands tied above their heads, were lowered into the pit to dangle over a pool of boiling lava. As a drum beat reached its crescendo the rope was cut and they plunged to a fiery death.

Leaving passengers stranded in a disabled airplane while the villain

Producer George Lucas and Director Steven Spielberg, serial plunderers.



A change of heart by TIGER WOMAN (Linda Stirling) saves western star Alan Lane from a burning death in her lava pit.

parachutes to safety is hardly new. The insidious Dr. Fu Manchu tried the same stunt in 1940 when he left Allan Parker and Mary Randolph to their fates in "Ransom in the Sky," chapter three of DRUMS OF FU MANCHU. Episodes of other serials often ended with the hero unconscious in a plunging aircraft. Escape credence was stretched in 1942's KING OF THE MOUNTIES when Sergeant King (Alan Lane) fell from an aircraft to land, luckily, in a Canadian haystack. George Lucas went further than any of them asking that we suspend our disbelief when Jones and friends bail-out in an inflatable raft.

The wild, roller coaster ride in the ore cars in TEMPLE OF DOOM stepped further into burlesque than even some of the serial producers would have dared, although variations of the ore car chase were a staple in several Republic serials. The little studio in the valley had an elaborately designed set for cave and mine sequences that were used extensively in their westerns and serials. Several of the tunnel sections were movable which enabled them to reconfigure the design for each new film. Heroes were sent careening through the shafts pursued by outlaws, irate natives or other nefarious individuals.

As Indiana, Short Round, and Willie run down a mine tunnel, the

murderous Thuggees release a torrent of water into the shaft. Pursued by the onrushing cataract, they rush to the end of the tunnel only to find escape cut off by a steep precipice. Clinging to the sides of the cliff they avoid the cascade that pours from the cave mouth. Similar circumstance plagued Linda Stirling and Richard Bailey in "The Fatal Flood," chapter nine of MANHUNT OF MYSTERY ISLAND when the Satanic Captain Mephisto opened the water gates sending a flood after the pair. The water shot out the side of a cliff and deposited them in a lake below. Frances Gifford as Nyoka in JUNGLE GIRL managed to elude a similar attempt on her life in the first chapter of that 1941 serial.

The primary influence for the sequence in INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM evidently came from the ending of "Flowing Death," chapter eight of ZORRO'S FIGHTING LEGION, in which the masked Zorro and his friend, Ramon, manage to ward off the attack of Don Del Oro's henchmen and escape down a handy tunnel. Don Del Oro orders his men to break open a dam holding a reservoir of water. The resulting flood splashes after the fleeing pair trapping them in a dead end, until next week of course. Interestingly, Spielberg had borrowed from the previous chapter of this same serial for the truck

sequence in RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK.

The suspension bridge over a deep chasm or raging river was another danger-fraught setting favored by serial makers, a point not missed by Spielberg and company. Indiana Jones fights a parcel of sword wielding Thuggees on a lengthy bridge at the end of TEMPLE OF DOOM. He cuts the supporting ropes sending most of his opponents plummeting into the crocodile infested waters hundreds of feet below. Indiana saves himself by grabbing onto the ropes and swinging with one end of the bridge to the side of the gorge. Nyoka and Zorro both resolved their dilemmas with severed bridges the same way in their serial exploits.

A conveyor belt which delivers some material to a processing device or furnace also recurred in many a cliffhanger; a rock crusher in SPY SMASHER, and in KING OF THE FOREST RANGERS poor Helen Talbot was seemingly doomed when she was carried toward a wood shredder in chapter nine. TEMPLE OF DOOM's variation on the theme has Indiana fighting to stay out of an ore crusher, and sending a black-robed guard into the machine to become a bloody smear on the grind wheel. You wouldn't see that in a Republic serial. □

REVIEWS

Doc Savage pulp, by way of Jerry Cornelius*

THE ADVENTURES OF BUCKAROO BANZAI: ACROSS THE 8TH DIMENSION

A 20th Century Fox release. 8/84, 103 mins. Director, W.D. Richter. Produced by W.D. Richter and Neil Canton. Written by Earl Mac Rauch. Edited by Richard Marks and George Bowers. Associate producer, Dennis Jones. Director of photography, Fred J. Koenkamp, ASC.

Buckaroo Banzai Peter Weller
Dr. Emilio Lizardo/Lord Whorfin... John Lithgow
Penny Priddy Ellen Barkin
New Jersey Jeff Goldblum
John Bigboote Christopher Lloyd
Perfect Tommy Lewis Smith
John Emdall Rosalind Cash

by Michael Mayo

You could say that this movie is about a bunch of red aliens from the planet ten who were exiled to the eighth dimension until some of them managed to escape during a freak interdimensional rift—and that famous *War of the Worlds* radio show was actually real and Orson Welles was later brainwashed into saying it was staged. The aliens have been here ever since, heading an obscure military/industrial plant. They're nasty but not terribly bright, are terrible dressers, and eat nothing from our world except junk food. (Empty Fritos and potato chip packages are strewn about, like nobody bothered to clean the set.)

The movie starts when Buckaroo Banzai, a world famous neurosurgeon/particle physicist/musician and zen warrior perfects the Oscillation Overthruster and drives through solid matter into the eighth dimension. The mad Italian scientist, Dr. Emilio Lizardo, who was part of an earlier effort to break the dimensional barrier, escapes from an insane asylum to steal the Overthruster so he and his Lectroids can go back to planet ten and take control. Lizardo is actually possessed by the evil Lectroid dictator, John Whorfin.

Or, you could say this movie is a freaked-out polyglot of huge slabs of pop culture slammed together like tectonic plates just to see what will rise up. The loose framework may be Doc Savage, but it's by way of Jerry Cornelius*, Terry Gilliam and everything else writer Earl Mac Rauch can throw in. Half the movie seems to be happening on the edges, and anyone expecting a normal movie or emotional strategy from BUCKAROO BANZAI is going to be baffled.

Like another off-center movie, REPO MAN, BANZAI completely disregards most movie conventions about characters and story. Nobody

*Hip science fiction hero created by British writer Michael Moorcock and featured in the stylish LAST DAYS OF MAN ON EARTH (see 4:2:4).



Perfect Tommy (Lewis Smith), Buckaroo Banzai (Peter Weller), New Jersey (Jeff Goldblum) and Reno (Pepe Serna), comic book fantasy heroes that didn't fly.

ever explains much about the nominal heroes, and Buckaroo, true to his western moniker, is a man of few words, except to say things like "No matter where you go, there you are."

The most vivid characters are not the heroes, but the aliens led by John Lithgow in a bright red fright wig, with an Italian accent that sounds like Bela Lugosi on too much Chianti, and Christopher Lloyd as an alien named John Bigboote (all the aliens are named John something or other) who is annoyed that he can get everyone to pronounce his name "Boo-tay" except Lithgow who keeps calling him "Big-bootee." The planet Tenners, who threw out Whorfin, are hovering in space over New Jersey in something that looks like a big cocklebur and are threatening to stop Whorfin by triggering World War III unless Banzai can stop him first. (Unlike the red Lectroids, the good Lectroids have Rasta dreadlocks and look like they got their costume ideas watching "Soul Train.")

Banzai is a treat, a genuine film for intellectual junk movie buffs. It's as if first-time director W. D. Richter decided to do with science fiction what Robert Altman did with MASH. Like BLADE RUNNER, BANZAI is densely designed (by the obviously very weird Michael Riva), a film where you can easily spend a couple of viewings just trying to catch all the stuff that goes flying by without explanation; and unlike GREMLINS, you don't get a sore side from having the movie nudge you in the ribs every five minutes just to make sure you get a joke.

Screenwriter Rauch's dizzy story is the end result of several years of aborted drafts dealing with the adventures of Buckaroo, his team of fellow

scientists/musicians, the Hong Kong Cavaliers, his Banzai Institute, and his world-wide (and galaxy-wide, it turns out) fan following, so that the movie which emerges only hits briefly on pieces of the whole story and history of the group before coming to an end. To people that like to have everything laid out for them, this is a very frustrating film.

The bad aliens emerge as a merciless lampoon of other science fiction films. Rather than the fearsome invaders of the 50's, these guys are a whiny, lazy lot, living on electricity and Twinkies, and the only way they've survived on Earth (far from trying to conquer it) has been to become government defense toadies. Indeed, until John Lithgow comes glowering back to steal Banzai's Overthruster to try and punch back through the eighth dimension and return to power, the Lectroids have been content to watch TV and hang out in their factory home.

Against Lithgow's wonderfully mad performance, the more subtle points of humor in the film tend to pale, unless you're loose enough to catch them. (Focus on everything at once, and nothing, as Buckaroo might say.) Some of the more briefly glimpsed bits of humor are gone before you realize it, like the Yoyodyne sign cheerily promising that at Yoyodyne, the Future Starts Tomorrow, and the three dozen or so lava lamps that seem to be part of the construction supplies for the Lectroid's return ship.

While not everything it could have been, BUCKAROO BANZAI is still more than most genre films ever attempt to be. It's a hopeful sign for a genre dominated by ripoff artists and megahype. □

BUCKAROO BANZAI Marketing Snafu

When 20th Century-Fox described BUCKAROO BANZAI as an "action-packed science fiction adventure comedy," it was clear the studio was confused about how to handle the film.

An agenda of convention promotions was developed on the advice of two science fiction fans hired by Fox to do the field work. Notable was the lack of other kinds of promotion on the part of studio publicity. Said former Fox publicist Rosemary LaSalandra, "Nobody knew what to do with BUCKAROO BANZAI. There was no simple way to tell anyone what it was about—I'm not sure anybody knew."

It wasn't until the film was released that Fox realized they could have found a broader base for the film. Positive feedback from critics like L.A.'s Sheila Benson, Chicago's Roger Ebert, Richard Corliss, et. al., made it apparent that the studio had grossly underestimated the intelligence and appeal of the film.

Original plans had been to treat the film as Fox's big movie to go up against STAR TREK, GREMLINS, and INDIANA JONES—1100 prints had been planned for. This was revised to 900 after problems with the campaign, and by August had dwindled to less than 400. ACROSS THE EIGHTH DIMENSION was added to the title, thereby eliminating the possibility of any audience other than science fiction fans.

The producers protested but Fox claimed they couldn't get exhibitors interested. Fox decided to "platform" the film, releasing 356 prints in 12 regional markets. After six weeks of mediocre box-office supported by mediocre print and television spots—the producers had been promised commercials during the Olympics—the release floundered.

A new poster was introduced, featuring "eight things you should know about Buckaroo Banzai," and a follow-up campaign was developed, aiming the film at a more sophisticated, more general audience. The film gained some ground with this approach. A spokesman for 20th Century-Fox said the studio was pleased with the performance of the film and noted with some pride that BUCKAROO BANZAI has made over \$5 million—though that figure is the gross and still \$6 million short of what the film cost to make—not to mention the cost of prints and advertising.

Max Rebeaux

No joy in the film universe of Brian DePalma

BODY DOUBLE

A Columbia release. 10/84, 109 mins. In color. Produced and directed by Brian DePalma. Editor, Jerry Greenberg. Production designer, Ida Random. Director of photography, Stephen H. Burum, A.S.C. Executive producer, Howard Gottfried. Screenplay by Robert J. Avrech and Brian DePalma. From a story by Brian DePalma.

Jake Craig Wasson
Holly Melanie Griffith
Sam Gregg Henry
Gloria Deborah Shelton
Jim McLean Guy Boyd
Rubin Dennis Franz
Drama Teacher David Haskell
Kimberly Rebecca Stanley

by David J. Hogan

Brian DePalma stares at us from a two-column photo in a recent issue of a leading film magazine. Hands clasped in front of his lowered face, he glowers, Rasputin-like, from beneath beetlewaxed brows. This, clearly, is a man to be reckoned with.

BODY DOUBLE, another of DePalma's obsequious homages to Hitchcock, involves voyeurism, sexual paranoia, violent death, pornography, misdirection, and murder. Dangerous material (and I mean that in an artistic, not social sense), but DePalma has shown a sure hand in the past; **OBSESSION** and **CARRIE**, for instance, are among the better American films of the 1970's. But this time he stumbles badly, completing the slip into contrivance, stupidity, and mean-spiritedness that characterized his 1980 thriller **DRESSED TO KILL**. DePalma is a man to be reckoned with—but then, so was Dr. Crippen.

Comparisons between the work of DePalma and Hitchcock are tiresome in the extreme, but DePalma continues to encourage them. **BODY DOUBLE** is a pastiche, primarily of **REAR WINDOW** and **VERTIGO**. Jake (Craig Wasson) is a young, faintly dim Hollywood actor who is fired from a Z-film called **VAMPIRE'S KISS** because his claustrophobia prevents him from lying still in a coffin. Like Jimmy Stewart's

acrophobia, Jake's affliction will dog him throughout his adventure. Jake meets Sam (Gregg Henry), a fellow actor who is housesitting a fabulous futuristic manse high in the Hollywood Hills. Besides the *de rigueur* circular bed and well-stocked bar, the house boasts a fabulous view, namely Gloria, a beautiful, uninhibited neighbor whose nightly masturbatory dance is visible through a telescope.

Jake assumes stewardship of the house and enjoys the view until he notices that his neighbor is being watched—and later followed—by another man. Jake's voyeurism encourages him to follow and confront Gloria (Deborah Shelton). His warning is rewarded with some feverish (and unlikely) kissing (giving DePalma an opportunity to clumsily rework his own whirling camera from **OBSESSION**), but not before the mysterious stranger snatches Gloria's purse. Jake, in pursuit, gets the sweaties in a pedestrian tunnel and the thief escapes.

Later, Jake watches helplessly as Gloria is attacked by the man, who impales her to her bedroom floor with a power drill that's nearly as long as a Buick. Jake's chance glimpse soon after of porno queen Holly Body (Melanie Griffith) convinces him that the woman he had observed through the telescope was Holly, and not Gloria. Jake's energies for the rest of the film are devoted to discovering who has been behind the deception, and why.

As thriller material goes, this isn't really bad. DePalma and co-scripter Robert J. Avrech offer a situation that, if artificial, is also provocative and alluring. The problem is that DePalma allows the air of contrivance to permeate the characters: their dialogue, behavior, and motivations. **BODY DOUBLE** gives us no evidence of its director's having lived a life outside of movie theaters. Hitch-

cock was able to tread the fine line between fantasy and reality, between audience belief and disbelief, but DePalma doesn't seem aware that the line even exists. The film is so rife with silliness that the Hardy Boys idiocy of the denouement is almost expected.

Jake's claustrophobia—the film's linchpin—is a good place to begin. How can Jake's tormentor be so sure the affliction will work for him at crucial moments. I dunno, and neither does DePalma, or he would have told us. Jake's tearful reminiscence of a childhood trauma is not sufficient to predict his behavior as an adult.

Only at the climax, when Jake is in danger of being buried alive, is his claustrophobia effectively exploited. (A particularly nice, subtle touch is that Jake drives an airy old convertible.) Acrophobia would have been better but, of course, that fear had already been taken. Agorophobia—the fear of open places—might have had possibilities; at the very least, it would have provided a neat reversal on a horror film cliché.

Jake's voyeurism works in the early part of the film because all of us like to watch. That's why we ogle car crashes and go to the movies. Jake does not seem like a peeper—he's simply a guy looking at something he probably shouldn't be looking at. But when he stares at Gloria through a shop window as she tries on underwear (what kind of store arranges its dressing rooms so that they are clearly visible from the outside walk?), and later picks a pair of her panties from the trash, he becomes more interesting, but less likeable. His subsequent willingness to immerse himself in the oily world of pornography in order to meet Holly Body hastens his fall from grace. I was concerned about Jake, but knew that I wouldn't feel too badly if things suddenly soured and he got it in the neck. Craig Wasson is very good in the role, and is one of the film's few bright spots.

Unfortunately, audience identification is only one of **BODY DOUBLE**'s problems. To say that Gloria's messy death by phallic power drill is distasteful and unnecessary is to say that Auschwitz was not a nice place. The flimsy *raison d'être* for the drill's presence is that the killer had used it to crack the woman's safe, but why does he turn it against her after Jake and two other men have noisily broken a downstairs window to gain entry? (For that matter, how does the killer get out of the house after the dirty deed?) Obviously, if the killer had reacted believably and forgotten about Gloria, the plot would have sputtered and stalled. Worse, DePalma could not have given us the gratuitous shot of the massive, bloody drill bit punching its way through the ceiling of the room below. In this universe, everything—



Hitchcock disciple Brian DePalma

including humanity—is sacrificed at the altar of images.

There are some hints of pallid satire during Jake's adventure in pornoland, but not enough to convince me that DePalma was serious about poking fun at the milieu. Melanie Griffith's Holly is lively and amusing, but also flip and superficial. It's impossible to tell if Griffith is capable of better work. It is distressing that her big scene calls for her to swivel her naked butt and fondle her breasts. It's not the nudity that is upsetting, but that it is turned to such trivial, exploitative purpose. As I watched Griffith's brave attempt to connect with a role that has as many human qualities as a sack of hamburger, I couldn't help thinking of Griffith's mother, Tippi Hedren, who brought a coolly elegant presence to two films by the man DePalma wishes to emulate. Hitchcock's exploitation of his actresses was artistic because it was subtle and psychological; DePalma's has become blatant, crude, and ugly.

There is an attractive new book about the making of **BODY DOUBLE**. Great attention is given to the challenge of certain shots, and to the patience required to capture the images on film, as though the difficulty of the filmmaking process somehow legitimizes the final product. Clearly, this is not so. Real movies are not made with lights and cameras, but with hearts and minds. Brian DePalma's psychological profile interests me only in that he is the purveyor of a popular art form that reflects and helps shape the attitudes of millions of his fellow citizens. His excess and his vengeful objectification of vulnerable, pretty women is not only shocking, but saddening.

There is no joy in the universe of **BODY DOUBLE**, no hope of loveliness or tenderness or redemption. The horror is counterbalanced with nothing. Hitchcock turned us into collaborators, but DePalma reduces us to accomplices. □

Vampire actor Craig Wasson gets fired by low-budget director Dennis Franz.



Milius is slim on intellect, heavy on the gut emotion

RED DAWN

An MGM/UA release, 8/84, 114 mins. In color. Director, John Milius. Executive producer, Sidney Beckerman. Producers, Buzz Feitshans and Barry Beckerman. Screenplay by Kevin Reynolds and John Milius. Editor, Thom Noble. Assistant Director, Arne L. Schmidt. Production designer, Jackson De Govia. Art director, Vincent Criscimano.

Jed Patrick Swayze
 Robert C. Thomas Howell
 Bella Ron O'Neal
 Streinikov William Smith
 Andy Powers Boothe
 Erica Lea Thompson
 Matt Charlie Sheen
 Daryl Darren Dalton
 Toni Jennifer Grey

by David J. Hogan

John Milius may be the director some of us love to hate, but he's also the wielder of an ethic that sums up the man that plenty of us would like to be. As expressed in Milius films like *DILLINGER*, *THE WIND AND THE LION*, and *CONAN, THE BARBARIAN*, the world is a brutishly violent place that, paradoxically, is often more desirable than the real world. Death according to Milius may be sudden and messy, but at least life's conflicts are clearly defined, and a man can go out fighting for what he believes—or for what he desires. There's no quiet capitulation in a John Milius film, no sighing regrets for a life badly lived. With the possible exception of Paul Schrader, Milius is the most obsessive and least ambiguous of the important American filmmakers that emerged in the seventies. If he were a painter, he'd coat his fists in reds and purples, and punch the canvas.

RED DAWN, a grand comic book of a movie that is slim on intellect but heavy with gut emotion, concerns a Russian land invasion of the United States. The small town that is the focus of the action is quickly overwhelmed, except for a small group of teenage boys and girls who retreat to the hills and become terrifyingly proficient guerillas. The kids are not particularly well-delineated except as broad types: leader, followers, in-betweeners. They are the children of a closed, macho society of guns and machines; Milius clearly adores their rugged young individualism. He displays the lifesaving virtues of roaring pickup trucks with big, knobby tires, and slaps down pantywaists who don't know how to hunt. He also takes a swipe at gun registration, when the Russians round up all the weapons in town after consulting the master registration list at the sporting goods store. The kids overcome some of this with cleverness, but it is their unyielding toughness and tenacity that elevates them. The spirit of



Russian and Cuban invaders cordon-off the fast food in John Milius's *RED DAWN*.

Teddy Roosevelt moves this town; the kids never give up.

Milius's premise (he co-wrote the script with Kevin Reynolds, from a story by Reynolds) is that Russia has had a series of disastrous harvests; her people are starving, Europe sees Russia's desperation, senses what will happen, and (with the exception of England) bows out of NATO, leaving North America isolated and virtually alone. A few carefully chosen Russian nuclear strikes disrupt American communications, and prepare the way for a land invasion of the United States. The U.S. voluntarily limits its own nuclear response, and fights the enemy from town to town. Given the present level of Russian paranoia (and the way in which many American politicians stupidly feed it), *RED DAWN* is chillingly reasonable in a political sense. In a practical sense, though, the film falls to pieces. Even granting that weary Soviet troops could rest and refuel in Alaska and Cuba, a land invasion of the U.S. would almost certainly be doomed. The logistics of quickly transporting sufficient numbers of troops would surely be prohibitive. Beyond this, it hardly seems reasonable to hope that a nuclear exchange could be purposely limited. One gets the feeling that once the computers kick in, all the missiles will go off and it'll be cinder time.

Yet for all of this, *RED DAWN* succeeds. Logic aside, its premise is one of those intriguing "what if?" questions that is endlessly fascinating. To be sure, the picture has antecedents, like Alfred Green's *INVASION U.S.A.* (1952; in which Russia invades Alaska) and Jack Webb's hysterical short film *RED NIGHTMARE* (ca. 1962; in which residents of Anytown, U.S.A. awake one morning to find the Commies magically in charge). *RED DAWN* avoids the clumsiness of its ancestors because of Milius's considerable directorial skill, and because of a talented young cast that is ably supported by veteran character actors like Stanton, Ben Johnson, Ron O'Neal (as a sympathetic Cuban colonel), and William

Smith. Powers Boothe brings his smouldering, knife-edged presence to the role of an American flier who briefly joins the young guerillas. The character's sardonic worldliness contrasts neatly with the naive idealism of the youngsters. (So powerful is Boothe's presence, in fact, that the film falters a bit when he is no longer on screen.) Patrick Swayze is splendid as the high-strung jock who leads the group, while Lea Thompson brings a perisive, thoughtful quality to her role as one of the young women.

Milius's bluntly forceful direction is aided by editor Thom Noble, who effectively springs the action upon us; mayhem typically begins only a few eyeblinks after a cut to a new scene. We are continually swept along by the urgency of battle. The opening sequence—a paratroop landing on the grounds of the local high school—is shockingly kinetic. At once ridiculous and horrifying, the sequence encapsulates the film's flaws and its undeniable power.

Milius is not unable in creating quieter moments. Establishing shots of the cold, craggy mountains that hide the guerillas have a chilly grandeur that suggests the tough intractability of the American spirit. Many of the visual compositions are strikingly formalized, emphasizing towering rocks or vast plains that dwarf the human figures. Milius's America is an imposing, challenging place.

The film has bitter humor, too, like the theatre marquee that advertises *ALEXANDER NEVSKY*, and the drive-in theatre that has been turned into a mad "reeducation" center of torture and brainwashing.

RED DAWN is a quirky movie that will achieve classic status of some sort—as either a paean to American values, or as a monument to kitsch. At the very least, it seems destined to become John Milius's signature film, one that celebrates guts and glory, teamwork and tenacity, bonding and bravery. Corny? Simpleminded? Perhaps, but the picture's final image made me shiver with pride. So let the sophisticates laugh. Pussywillows, sez I. □

Example of science fiction and horror at its genre best

THE TERMINATOR

An Orion Pictures release, 10/84, 108 mins. Director, James Cameron. Producer, Gale Anne Hurd. Executive producers, John Daly and Derek Gibson. Written by James Cameron and Gale Ann Hurd. Editor, Mark Goldblatt. Art director, George Costello. Special mechanical effects, Stan Winston. Special visual effects, Fantasy II Film Effects. Stop-motion animation, Doug Beswick. Assistant Director, Betsy Magruder. Set decorator, Maria Rehman Caso.

Terminator Arnold Schwarzenegger
 Kyle Reese Michael Biehn
 Sarah Connor Linda Hamilton
 Traxler Paul Winfield
 Vukovich Lance Henriksen
 Matt Rick Rossovich
 Ginger Bess Motta

by Dan Scapperotti

Giant tank-like machines rumble over a devastated landscape crushing the skulls and bones of humans under their mighty tracks. Laser beams flash back and forth between these deadly behemoths and the ragged men who dart among the ruins seeking cover. In the year 2029 the future of mankind hangs in the balance as the final conflict for man's destiny becomes that of human vs. machine.

This is the startling opening of *THE TERMINATOR*, the surprise film of the season. Kept mainly under wraps by distributor Orion, the film is an action-laden exercise in science fiction violence which manages to be both derivative and original at the same time.

In the future machines become so sophisticated they consider mankind a threat to their existence. Robots begin a nuclear war which devastates the planet. The machines then begin a systematic extermination of remaining humans. One man, guerrilla leader John Connor, rallies his forces and defeats the machinations of the hardware warriors. The machines create a Terminator, a human-like robot and send it back in time to present day Los Angeles to kill Sarah Connor, the future mother of John, in an attempt to change the course of history. Learning the enemy plans, John Connor dispatches Kyle Reese into the past to stop the Terminator.

Not since *ROAD WARRIOR* has the genre exhibited so much exuberant carnage. Hulking Arnold Schwarzenegger, originally tapped to play the hero, decided to essay the role of the villain instead, and it's his best performance to date. From the moment he materializes, naked on a deserted street and plunges his arm through the chest of a young punk, you know Schwarzenegger is bad.

Schwarzenegger's curt monotone delivery perfectly fits the character. Entering a police station he learns

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THE TERMINATOR Special Effects by Fantasy II

By Martin Periman

To fully give *life* to THE TERMINATOR's unstoppable Mr. T, necessitated the skills of Fantasy II, the special effects company headed by Gene Warren, Jr. The film's climactic chase scene involved cuts between two versions of the android, a full-scale mechanical Terminator, constructed by Stan Winston in his shop, and a stop-motion puppet built by Doug Beswick at Fantasy II.

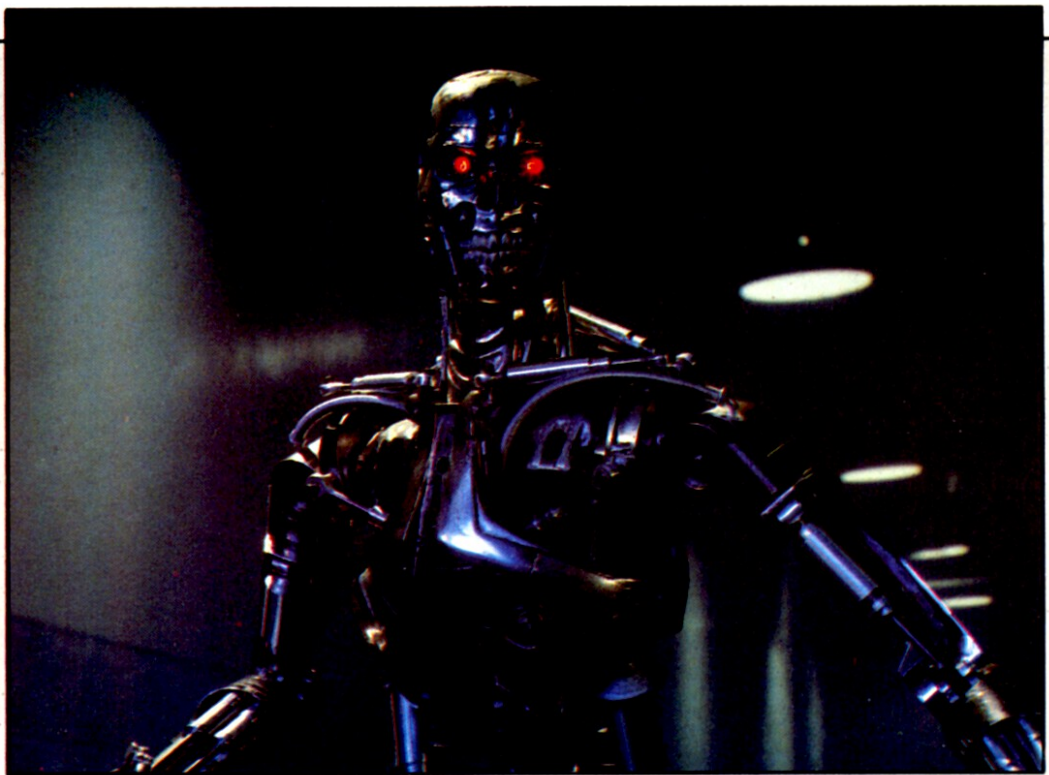
"The first time you see it rise up it's on a rear projection plate behind the actors," said Warren. "That's the full-scale model being raised up with rods and wires from above."

The full-sized mechanical model is used whenever the scene requires a close-up of the Terminator, or whatever is left of him. Fantasy II's stop-motion puppet appears nine times in full shots of the skinned Terminator. Prime examples include when he's walking out of the fire, moving down the factory's hallway, stalking along the catwalk, and receiving Reese's blow with the pipe.

"It was a trial by fire," said Pete Kleinow, who animated Beswick's puppet. Lack of time and money were two major hindrances.

Although the film was number one at the box office in November, it was not a big-budget picture. Budget restrictions prevented Warren's crew from building a smaller, more workable puppet. Director Jim Cameron wanted the miniature to be as detailed as the intricate full-scale mechanical model.

Fantasy II used a two-foot model, which is large by puppet standards. In stop-motion photography, larger puppets complicate movements. A smaller puppet would have made it difficult to duplicate the joints, appendages, and gears as they appear in the full-scale mechanical



Doug Beswick's stop-motion Terminator model, animated by Pete Kleinow for Gene Warren Jr.'s Fantasy II company.

model.

At the beginning, all the mechanical adjustments of the joints "seemed unsolvable," according to Kleinow. Three months of "adjusting and working it over" were required, notes Kleinow, to do those final sequences. And there was pressure every step of the way. Both the full-scale mechanical model and the puppet were highly detailed creations. As such, part of the problem was the time it required Winston to build the full-sized version, which Fantasy II's crew would use as model for the puppet.

Gene Warren, Jr. noted the main challenge: "Director Jim Cameron wanted the Terminator in its robotic form to have all of these cams,

pistons, and joints "practical," that is they should function, so they had to be built to appear to be functional." Off-camera servo motors or film crew members would work the mechanical model limbs and frame.

Since the full-scale model was completed only days before it was required in the principal photography, the puppet, according to Warren, "wasn't finished until weeks after that, which put a tremendous amount of pressure on us to deliver."

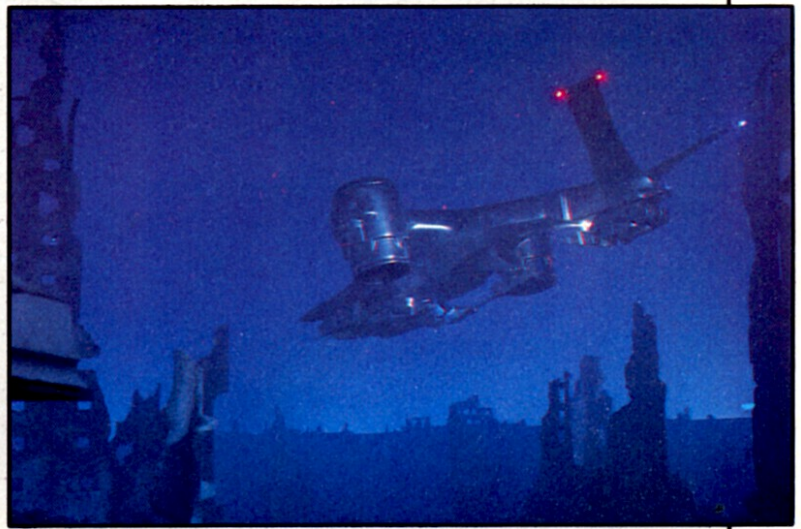
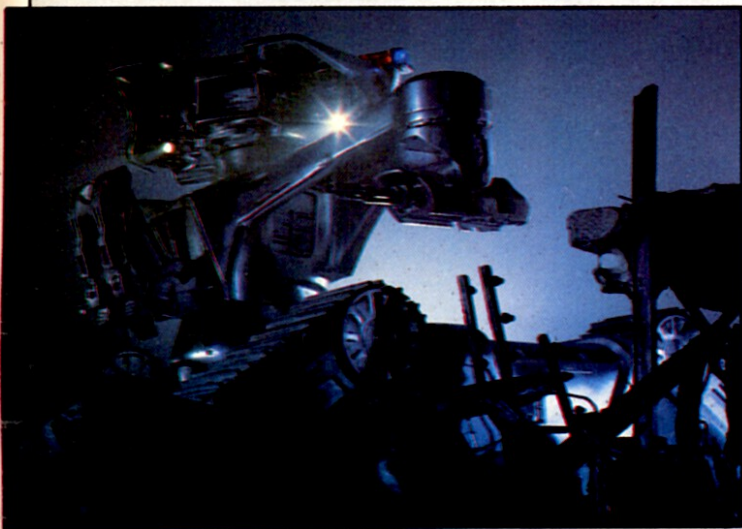
Warren added, "Pete Kleinow did not have a lot of time to do tests or work out how the puppet moved. He just had to go right into the shooting." That included details like recreating the limp the Terminator affects after being run over by the

truck. In a two-foot puppet, joint movements are frustratingly restrictive for an animator.

Aside from the successful stop-action work, Fantasy II did quite a bit of other effects for the movie. They created the future-sequence robots and flying machines and most of the explosions, the lighting, the gun muzzleblasts. The tanker truck explosion, which was performed with a model truck in the Fantasy II parking lot, was the work of pyrotechnician Joe Viskocil.

"We did about 90 shots," said Warren. "Most of it you wouldn't think much of." That, however, is part of the trick when it comes to special effects; if they look natural, you've done your job well. □

Models by Mike Joyce of a Hunter-Killer Tank (left) and Copter (right), filmed for the futuristic warfare scenes on a large-scale miniature set built at Fantasy II.



SF Film overthrows the Queen of Outer Space

NIGHT OF THE COMET

An Atlantic Releasing film. 11/84, 100 mins. In color. Director, Thomas Eberhardt. Executive Producers, Thomas Coleman and Michael Rosenblatt. Producers, Andrew Lane and Wayne Crawford. Director of photography, Arthur Albert. Production Designer, John Muto. Written by Thomas Eberhardt.

Regina Catherine Mary Stewart
Samantha Kelli Maroney
Hector Robert Beltran
Carter Geoffrey Lewis
Audrey Mary Woronov
Oscar John Achorn
Doris Sharon Farrell

by David J. Hogan

Remember QUEEN OF OUTER SPACE? She lived on Venus, see, and was going to conquer Earth with something called the Beta Disintegrator, which looked like a giant cardboard box decorated with polka dots. I looked at that gadget when I was a kid and snorted. Yeah, leave it to a bunch of silly women to come up with a weapon as dumb as that.

Then there was the ASTOUNDING SHE-MONSTER, who came to Earth in spiked heels and a lame body suit, looking more like a fugitive burlesque queen than someone to be taken seriously.

I could go on. Science fiction and horror cinema has rarely taken women seriously. You know I could go on. Even Princess Leia had to be

rescued an awful lot. Socially speaking, the genre has remained more than a little retarded. Women—comes the subliminal message—are destined to be dumbbells, or born to be abused.

So it's somehow appropriate that the year of Gerry Ferraro should also produce NIGHT OF THE COMET, a cheeky—if derivative—sf/horror spoof that celebrates the spunk, smarts, and ingenuity of its young female protagonists. Shocking, isn't it? Here's a genre film that audaciously suggests that women have boobs and brains.

Writer/director Thom Eberhardt is an unabashed fan who is not afraid to look around for inspiration. COMET—part homage to earlier sf, part burlesque, part music video—is resolutely eclectic, yet glows with an eccentric charm that is uniquely its own, as two young girls and a truck-driver become allies, and square off against a quasi-military, quasi-government organization that is manipulating the end of the world for its own evil ends.

Robert Beltran (the main meal in EATING RAOUL) is wry and likeable as Hector, the truckdriver, but the film belongs to the two young women. Regina is Catherine Mary Stewart, a lovely, appealing actress

seen in THE LAST STARFIGHTER. Regina is an usherette at the El Rey, and not a very good one, excessively absorbed in the lobby video game and unwilling to "walk the house" because the patrons throw Milk Duds and Dots. She's willful, prideful, and a terror with a machine gun (thanks to Daddy, a mercenary in Central America).

Samantha is played by Kelli Maroney, the cutest, sassiest, most edible young actress to break into movies in a long time. A veteran of TV's RYAN'S HOPE and now seen on ONE LIFE TO LIVE, Maroney can steal scenes, and knows how to make the most of a close-up. Her Samantha is hilariously real, vain and self-absorbed, a real child of suburbia.

With her big smile, halo of strawberry-blonde hair, and woman-child's body snuggled into a colorful cheerleader's costume, Samantha transcends reality and becomes positively emblematic, a juicy icon to youthful high spirits. How refreshing that—unlike so many other directors of genre films—Thom Eberhardt cherishes his girls.

Lest we forget that Eberhardt is not yet ready to make the world forget Steven Spielberg, it should be noted that NIGHT OF THE COMET has a

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Kelli Maroney does away with the genre film cliché of the helpless female.

Low-budget effects for NIGHT OF THE COMET

By Kyle Counts

John Muto and Ted Rae, who worked together on STRANGE INVADERS, teamed up on low-budget effects for NIGHT OF THE COMET. As the film was not conceived as an effects vehicle—the only planned visual effect, in fact, was a shot of the comet's arrival—the amount allotted for visual effects was nominal.

As production designer, Muto was responsible for the visual style of the film, as well as integrating the effects with the live action. Rae's job was to determine the most

practical way to engineer and execute the shots. Both were involved in the actual building and painting of all miniatures.

The comet was a high-intensity bulb, shot through a handmade "scratch" (star) filter (sand on acetate). Once the motion control move (shot at Lumeni animation camera service by Rick Bugenthal) was calculated, the trick came in creating a series of overlapping cross-dissolves while repositioning the filter so that the flare would stay in motion and keep the comet burning bright.

For the shot of the comet approaching Earth, a painted globe representing the planet was filmed in the dark and backlit. The hi-tech main title used a set of brass-plated letters, mounted on glass, the only true optical effect in the film. Everything else was planned and created in-camera to preserve a first-generation look.

A shot of the city, bathed in a succession of eerie colors while clouds and glowing streaks sweep through the sky, was a combination of photographs (shot by director Thom Eberhardt, who is also an accomplished still photog-

John Muto's red-filtered post-holocaust design of the desert research facility. Inset: Setting up the miniature for the shot.



The comet reaches Earth, composited on an animation stand.

rapher) and time-lapse photography.

An establishing shot of the above ground portion of the scientists' desert facility was a miniature extended on a concealed arm to create the proper perspective.

A master shot of the underground interior of the facility, complete with an observation tower and moving elevator lights, was the most complicated shot in the film, a combination of a set, miniature, airbrush work and rear projection that took six weeks to orchestrate and 26 continuous hours to shoot. The

full-size set was built at Raleigh Studios and shot from a catwalk by matte cameraman Austin McKinney.

An ending shot of rain washing away the radioactive dust in Los Angeles used still photos (again by Eberhardt) of clouds and downtown Los Angeles, matted together on an animation stand with light rain double-exposed onto the image. The rain element (rain against a black curtain) was originally from Billy Wilder's classic, THE APARTMENT, and came from Mercer, one of the old Hollywood optical houses.



Hansel & Gretel in space an embarrassment for Lucasfilm

THE EWOK ADVENTURE

An ABC-TV presentation, produced by Lucasfilm. 11/25/84. 120 mins. In color. Director, John Korty. Producer, Thomas G. Smith. Executive producer, George Lucas. Photography, John Korty. Visual effects, ILM. Writer, Bob Carrau, based on a story by George Lucas.

Mace Eric Walker
Cindel Aubree Miller
Wicket Warwick Davis
Mom Fionnula Flanagan
Dad Guy Boyd
Derj Dan Frishman
Narrator Burl Ives

by Bill Kelley

To all readers age 8 and under: Yes, THE EWOK ADVENTURE was a super movie, and that Gorax sure was a scary monster, and those furry Ewoks sure are neat looking and, boy, I hope we get one of our very own for Christmas. I can hardly wait. Now, isn't it time all you kids were in bed?

So much for that. Now for the rest of us. It may seem that only a curmudgeon would knock George Lucas' first foray into prime time television, particularly when the venture is a family-oriented fantasy like THE EWOK ADVENTURE. Why split hairs carping over the film's meager plot, its abundance of manipulative, "cute" scenes and its shortage of action? This is, after all, television, right? Doesn't the tube offer little enough in the genre to appease viewers who are alarmed that the TV fantasy films their kids are seeing come mostly via R-rated cable fare?

That defense is valid enough, as far as it goes, but in the case of THE EWOK ADVENTURE, which revives the industrious, Koala bear-like creatures who helped Princess Leia and Luke Skywalker in RETURN OF THE JEDI (1983), it goes a very short way indeed. Undisclosed to all but persistent reporters, and unknown to viewers, is that THE EWOK ADVENTURE is little more than a marketing tool, conveniently scheduled for the Christmas buying season (and the November network ratings "sweeps") to induce parents to buy furry Ewok dolls and other Lucasfilm gadgets as children's holiday gifts.

That kind of merchandising ploy is not new in television, and shouldn't be especially shocking. All of the "Making of..." specials showcasing the technical effects for RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK and the STAR WARS movies (of which EWOK is a spinoff) and other Lucas-Spielberg efforts are patently devised to drumbeat imminent reissues of the films. But there's a sharp difference between an hour-long, behind-the-scenes examination which unabashedly whets one's appetite for a feature film and reveals legitimate, inside information, and a TV movie which purports to give us, without charge, a

small-scale variation on the movies, but actually does nothing of the sort.

Audiences now expect, indeed, demand, a state-of-the-art level of craftsmanship from Lucasfilm. Whatever one's complaints about the narrative shortcomings of his post-AMERICAN GRAFFITI fantasy movies, there is no denying that George Lucas and his ILM team have upgraded the standard of special effects in the industry. But THE EWOK ADVENTURE, apart from some breathtaking, seamless matte paintings, is a technological joke. Characters dart frantically from side to side of the frame before an obvious process screen (its lower border apparently obscured by a grass mat) on which a man in an ill-fitting suit (the allegedly frightening Gorax, looking like an upended hound with a boar's head) thrashes about menacingly. The title characters themselves are embarrassingly immobile: though they babble incessantly in the high-pitched gibberish which made the Ewoks so "adorable" in RETURN OF THE JEDI, the mouths of their headgear remain rigid. They look like ventriloquist's dummies with their jaws wired shut.

The plot is an admitted reworking of HANSEL AND GRETEL, which probably reads great on paper, but never achieves the charm of a fairy tale setting (despite being shot among the Redwood forests of Marin County with an almost medieval flourish by director John Korty).

Two children (Eric Walker, Aubree Miller) are separated from their parents when their family spacecraft crashlands on Endor and the dreaded Gorax makes off with the adults (Guy Boyd, Fionnula Flanagan). The children are discovered by the Ewoks (including Wicket, played by 14-year-old British dwarf Warwick Davis, who was the hit of RETURN OF

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Aubree Miller, Tony Cox and Wickett, a character from RETURN OF THE JEDI.



Wicket the Ewok, played by 14 year-old British dwarf Warwick Davis.

THE EWOK ADVENTURE John Korty on directing for Lucasfilm

By Bill Kelley

Director John Korty recalled that when George Lucas approached him about directing THE EWOK ADVENTURE, "George said, 'It's just an hour special, and we'll probably do it in eight or ten days.' Then the money and everything went right up the ladder, and it took over 40. The film started shooting June 11, and post-production dragged on for months."

The expansion of Lucas' first TV venture from a one-hour holiday special (variously titled THE EWOK THANKSGIVING SPECIAL and THE EWOK LEGEND in its early stages) reportedly came at the behest of ABC. The network, involved in a fierce, season-long ratings battle for second place with NBC (which it eventually lost), wanted a full-blown movie, not simply a one-hour featurette which would be a minor companion piece to RETURN OF THE JEDI, the movie that introduced the Ewoks.

"Actually, CBS was the network George originally wanted to go with," revealed Korty. CBS aired special effects documentaries on the making of the STAR WARS films and RAIDERS OF THE LOST

ARK, and also telecast the first network showing of STAR WARS itself, preceded by a special Lucasfilm prologue, in which Mark Hamill introduced the film. But, said Korty, "CBS was too stingy, and wouldn't come up with the money."

Ironically, he added, "ABC got a real bargain, and only paid for about 50% of what it cost." Korty indicated that ABC's broadcast contract had been worked out in advance of the film's climb to an uncommonly high (for TV) \$4.5 million production budget. ABC reportedly contracted for two airings, and Lucasfilm Ltd. retains ownership of THE EWOK ADVENTURE, which it will release theatrically overseas. In its first airing November 25, THE EWOK ADVENTURE was a ratings smash, attracting more than 40% of the available audience.

Korty, 48, has been a friend and neighbor of Lucas for 15 years (his Mill Valley, California-based Korty Films, which won an Oscar for the documentary feature, WHO ARE THE DEBOLTS? is located not far from Lucasfilm's headquarters), and the pair collaborated on an

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Peter Hyams on directing 2010: ODYSSEY II

By Charlotte Wolter

One afternoon in April, 1983, Dr. Richard Terrile, Planetary Scientist at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Pasadena, California, was notified that a movie director was on the phone and wanted to ask some questions. Filmmakers frequently call JPL scientists for advice, so Terrile did not expect anything unusual when the voice on the phone identified itself as Peter Hyams from MGM.

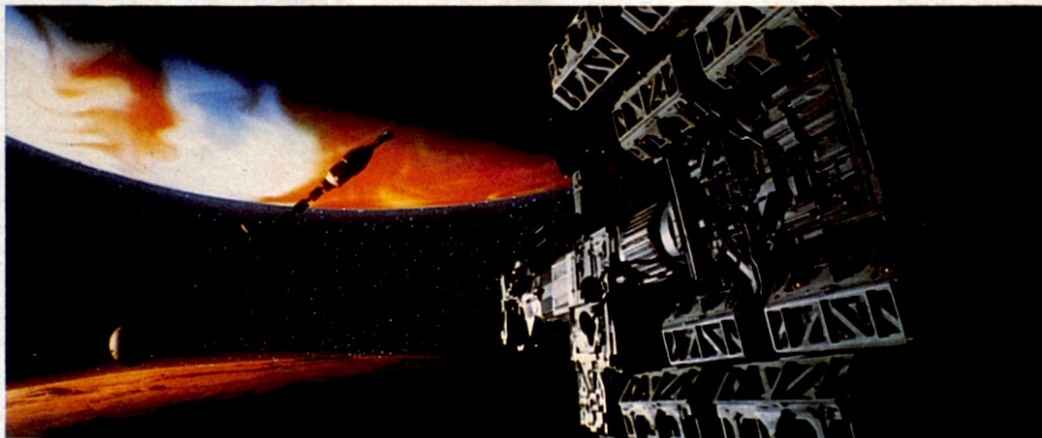
"Are you familiar with the radio observatory at Arecibo (Puerto Rico)?" Hyams asked. "Of course," replied Terrile. "Could it detect something in space," Hyams continued urgently, "something about 100 meters long, metallic, and in the orbit of Jupiter?"

"I said to him," remembered Terrile, chuckling, "Let's see, 100 meters long, metallic, orbit of Jupiter, you're a movie director... you must have just bought the rights to 2010." There was dead silence on the other end of the line."

Indeed, Hyams had recently acquired 2010, but the director was anything but certain he would actually make the film. Hyams entered into 2010 kicking and screaming all the way, not at all enthusiastic about tackling a project of this magnitude. "Kubrick has always been my idol," Hyams explained. "He is someone who any filmmaker will go to see with a pad and pencil. I was actually horror struck at the thought of making a film that would dare to be compared with the first."

"There were two reasons why I felt I ought to do it," he continued earnestly. "One, the genesis of the film was not a movie company saying 'let's make a sequel of a successful film.' The genesis was the author of the book writing another book, because there was a story to tell."

"And, two, when I first took the book home and my kids found out



The Russian ship Leonov, reminiscent of ships seen in *ALIEN* and *OUTLAND*, approaches the Discovery, spinning in orbit between Jupiter and one of its moons. Below: Director Peter Hyams checks the sculpture of the film's Star Child.

what I was doing, they practically camped right in front of me while I read the whole thing. The first half of the book was, to me, very technical and not that moving. The more I smiled, because I was feeling that I could say no to the project, the more my kids frowned. But, there is a point in the book where the story takes a left hand turn, and they saw the smile disappear from my face."

"More than anything," Hyams said with feeling, "I felt this was a chance to make a motion picture that was about something special, valid, and emotional, the notion of making contact. I think that ultimately, it is so different from 2001 and has something so unique to say, that it is simply worth the effort. You get few opportunities to tell a story that means that much to you."

Acting as screenwriter, as well as producer, director, and cinematographer for 2010, Hyams appointed himself to the task of interpreting Clarke's work. He sounds almost worshipful when talking about his devotion to bringing 2010 as a story to the screen, as opposed to a special effects extravaganza.

He explained, "Everyone has seen a number of very elaborate motion pictures, made by Spielberg, Lucas, or Ridley Scott, with phenomenal

models and sets. Ultimately, all these processes are to tell a story. If the story is about something of value, if it makes an emotional impact on you, then it is successful."

Hyams chose to emphasize the theme of making contact in his script, although he leans toward characterizing the alien force as something beneficial for the human race, an idea more his than Arthur C. Clarke's. "I don't think there is any more primal thought than to find out if it is possible to make contact with something other than ourselves," the director stated. "This is a film about that. It turns out that what we are making contact with is wonderful. That is the story I wanted to tell."

Hyams' computer collaboration with Clarke on the writing of 2010's script is now legend, thanks in part to the director's frequent retelling of the tale. While Clarke remained at his home in Sri Lanka and Hyams was in Los Angeles, the writer and director corresponded daily, using identical computers, software and modems. Hyams sent script revisions and Clarke replied with his comments, through a phone link utilizing the Indian Ocean communications satellite.

"I would tell him what I wanted to do and ask his advice on the best way



to do it, tell him the kinds of problems I had encountered along the way. I have worked closer with Arthur in the writing of this screenplay than I ever have with anybody. In some respects, Arthur's blessing would be mandatory before I would make a change. I felt my charge was to take someone else's novel, make it into a film and realize his intent."

Hyams has stressed his commitment to Clarke's *intent*, as he terms it. "I think when someone writes a book, that person is the creator," Hyams said emphatically. "When you add that it is Arthur C. Clarke, what you are doing is even more important. I believe a film director is in many respects a tailor, really no more than that. Sometimes major alterations have to be done, but you are still altering someone else's suit. So the point of the film is to realize what was written."

Reportedly, a book is in the works about Hyams' and Clarke's computer correspondence, along the lines of a diary of their letters to each other, and, according to Hyams, Clarke has already agreed to write a sequel to 2010, with the director at the ready to begin filming.

An MGM dictum that 2010 be available for Christmas, 1984 release, with a completion date less than 18 months from his phone call to Terrile, plunged Hyams, acting as both producer and director, into an excruciatingly tight production schedule.

Hoping to give much latitude to special effects work, Hyams anticipated a large pool of funds. Though the final budget—\$25 million—was not

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The Leonov docks with the Discovery to study the mysterious black monolith orbiting Jupiter.



Science fiction gets dumbed-up again for mass consumption

2010

An MGM-UA release. 12 84, 115 mins. In color, panavision and dolby stereo. Written for the screen, produced and directed by Peter Hyams. Based on the novel by Arthur C. Clarke. Director of photography, Peter Hyams. Production designer, Albert Brenner. Visual effects supervisor, Richard Edlund. Editor, James Mitchell.

Heywood Floyd Roy Scheider
Walter Curnow John Lithgow
Tanya Kirbuk Helen Mirren
R. Chandra Bob Balaban
Dave Bowman Keir Dullea
HAL 9000 Douglas Rain
Victor Milson James McEachin
Maxim Brailovsky Elya Baskin

by Bruce Crouchet

If genre aficionados had hoped this sequel to 2001 would be able to stand with dignity alongside its worthy progenitor, they will be bitterly disappointed in 2010, the vapid and offensive follow-up to the 1968 film. It is a movie that fails mightily both as a successor to 2001 and, worse, on its own as an effective and realistic science fiction film. Director-producer-screenwriter Peter Hyams, working from Arthur C. Clarke's tepid novel, attempts to explore the more human side of space travel in the 21st century, a safe move that makes the film more accessible—and potentially more lucrative—than its meta-physically oriented predecessor. The end result, however, is a frustratingly amateurish piece that collapses under its own weight long before it ever gets off-planet.

The opening scenes set the tone for what follows: First, an extended and



An apparition of David Bowman (Keir Dullea) warns Scheider to leave Jupiter.

simple-minded prologue that assumes no one on Earth has ever seen or heard of 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY. Cut to a radio telescope array in the New Mexico desert where Dr. Dimitri Moisevitch (actor Dana Elcar, affecting the worst Russian accent ever recorded on film) and Dr. Heywood Floyd (Roy Scheider) literally shout bad dialogue at each other concerning the lost *Discovery* mission. Bereft of subtlety, this scene foreshadows 2010's entire approach, a need to club its audience into submission with a heavy-handedness that could shatter concrete. Anyone wor-

ried about coming away from this film confused or uncertain will be relieved to know that things are spelled out with a deliberateness that would do justice to SESAME STREET.

Peter Hyam's previous films (CAPRICORN ONE, OUTLAND, THE STAR CHAMBER) have all been characterized by blatant lapses of verisimilitude and 2010 suffers the more for its director's bad habits. Hyams allegedly set out to make a "realistic" science fiction film, yet there are enough cracks in his realism to make it clear that he has no concept whatsoever of what makes an SF film

realistic. The physical errors in 2010 are certain to wring embarrassment from even the most undemanding audience.

The Russian spacecraft *Leonov*, though visually impressive, appears to have been cobbled together using leftover props from ALIEN and OUTLAND. As the camera drifts through its claustrophobic interiors, one gets an eerie feeling of having been here before. Environmental suits worn by the astronauts look like clumsy throwbacks to the early space program in contrast to the sleek EMU worn by the Bowman apparition mid-way through the movie.

Stanley Kubrick, by necessity, used animation for his computer video read-outs, giving them the look of high-resolution flat screen videos that will surely be in use by the early 2000's. Production designer Albert Brenner apparently makes use of present day CRT's, a move that appears jarringly anachronistic by contrast. Overall, Brenner's concept of the future, aided and abetted by "visual futurist" Syd Mead, looks good without looking in any way authentic.

Most annoying of all is the deliberate use of sound in space. No doubt this was done to satisfy someone's misplaced urge for dramatic value, never mind that 2001 managed drama enough using only the vacuum silence of space overlaid with the astronauts' breathing. Though every

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Steve Martin's comic madness is astonishing

ALL OF ME

A Universal release. 9 84, 95 mins. Technicolor. Director, Carl Reiner. Producer, Stephen Friedman. Screenplay by Phil Alden Robinson. Adaptation by Henry Olek. Based on the novel *Me Two* by Ed Davis. Associate producer, Phil Alden Robinson.

Roger Cobb Steve Martin
Edwina Cutwater Lily Tomlin
Terry Hoskins Victoria Tennant
Peggy Schuyler Madolyn Smith
Prahka Lasa Richard Libertini
Burton Schuyler Dana Elcar

by Kyle Counts

ALL OF ME sets sail on a premise that is loaded with comic potential: jazz-loving lawyer Roger Cobb (Steve Martin) is routinely assigned to amend the will of dying millionaire Edwina Cutwater (Lily Tomlin), who has employed a Hindu swami (Richard Libertini) to transfer her soul into the body of her stable hand's daughter (Victoria Tennant, with a bad bleach job). As the beneficiary to Edwina's enviable estate, Tennant (who pretends to be more interested in "becoming one with the universe" than in Edwina's fortune) will take Edwina's repackaged soul on a fun-filled journey through the life

Edwina was too sickly to enjoy.

And die the disagreeable Edwina does. But the transmigrating process goes haywire when someone knocks the sacred urn containing her spirit out the window, beaming Roger down below. Edwina assumes control of the right side of Roger, becoming equal partner in his movements and thoughts and forcing him to re-evaluate his life through a series of complications right out of an episode of THREE'S COMPANY.

Unfortunately, ALL OF ME operates on just that level of lowbrow humor. It plays for big, roll-in-the-aisles laughs (I don't think I've ever heard audience laughter at a movie that sounded so much like the desperate, forced guffaws heard on television laughtracks) but it's rather like watching Chaplin in A COUNTESS FROM HONG KONG—great talent stranded in poorly executed and frequently embarrassing material.

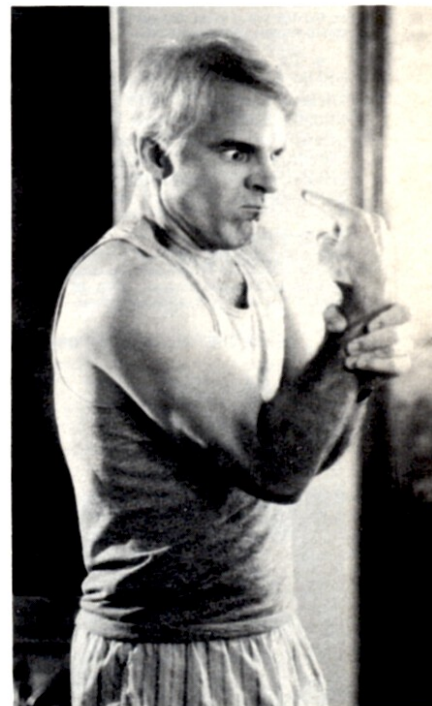
While it would be nice to report that the teaming of Martin and Tomlin is inspired casting, it would be purely a case of wish fulfillment. The pairing never quite gels because their

scenes together are either too brief or done with Martin playing to Tomlin's disembodied voice. Too, there is no generosity among the leads; neither plays off the other so much as to each other, resulting in self-absorbed performances, much like Mae West and W.C. Fields in MY LITTLE CHICKADEE—another movie that should have been better considering the talent involved.

Most distressingly, the film squanders Tomlin's enormous comic gifts by giving her a one-note (and not particularly funny) character to play. Tomlin's performance doesn't go very far in overcoming the writing either. There's no edge to it; there's far too much wistfulness and not enough daring. Her Edwina seems neither fragile enough nor old enough (even though she acts like a decrepit dowager, her make-up suggests early 40's) to convince us she is such a crusty, embittered human being.

Martin fares better because he is willing to take risks as an actor. As a straight man he's better than average

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Steve Martin as Roger Cobb, tries to restrain the accusing finger of Edwina, who controls the right side of his body.

FILM RATINGS

AFTER THE FALL OF NEW YORK

Directed by Martin Dolman (aka Sergio Martino). An Almi Pictures film, 1.85. With: Michael Sopkiw, Valentine Monnier, Anna Kanakis, Roman Geer.

In 2019 radiation from a nuclear war has left earth a sterile planet. The President of the Pan American confederation, hiding-out in his secret Alaskan base learns that a fertile woman is in New York, now a burned-out shell surrounded by desert. He sends Parsifal to find her and bring her back for a journey to an uncontaminated planet. Filmed partially in Queens and Monument Valley, this Italian pulp sci-fi epic is high on action and low on logic. Director Martino keeps the pace lively, but his script is brimming with insipid, clichéd dialogue. Some interesting miniatures help to keep it visually interesting. ●●DKS

THE BROTHER FROM ANOTHER PLANET

With: Joe Morton, Darryl Edwards, Steve James, Leonard Jackson, Bill Cobbs.

Joe Morton plays a mute black slave from outer space who comes to Harlem as the end of the line of an extra-terrestrial underground "railroad." He is pursued by two caucasian alien immigration officers but is aided by friends he makes in the ghetto. There's not much of a plot, but Sayles' persistent humor and inventiveness keep the picture light and interesting even when it threatens to become pretentious. ●●DKF

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Directed by Clive Donner. A CBS-TV Hallmark Travenol Ltd. production, 12.84, 100 mins. With: George C. Scott, David Warner, and Frank Finlay.

A TV rarity: opulent, atmospheric, faithful, and very well cast Dickens adaptation, with a formidable Scott at its center. Competently directed in England by the editor of the 1951 Alastair Sim version, which remains the definitive treatment. ●●BK

DON'T OPEN TILL CHRISTMAS

Directed by Edmund Purdom, 12.84, 86 mins. A 21st Century Distribution release.

With: Edmund Purdom, Alan Lake, Caroline Munro, Belinda Mayne.

A psycho is killing people in Santa suits in London. One is garrotted, one shot through the roof of his mouth so his brains come out the back of his head, one speared, one emasculated with a razor in the loo. The writer's imagination failed then, as 4 more are stabbed. London tourist spots abound in this boring film, which was apparently aimed at US audiences, since the giver of British Yuletide gifts is known as "Father Christmas" not "Santa Claus." Makeup by Pino Ferranti contains a couple of nice eye gougings. Caroline Munro, second billed in the ads, has a 3-minute walk-on as herself, in which her voice is dubbed. ○JPH

DUNE

With: Kyle MacLachlan, Francesca Annis, Jose Ferrer, Max Von Sydow, Sting, Linda Hunt, Dean Stockwell, and lots of others.

Of course things had to be cut out, but there was no need to toss *Dune* into a cuisinart. A book of innumerable rich, subtle flavors becomes a cold, bland piece of film. ○AM

FERAT VAMPIRE

Directed by Juraj Herz. Czechoslovakia, 1981 (Filmes), 95 mins. With: Jiri Menzel, Dagmar Veskrnova, Petr Cepek.

What happened to the witty, socially satirical Czech cinema of former years? Movies like NICK CARTER IN PRAGUE, THE STOLEN AIRSHIP, and Juraj Herz's THE CREMATOR have paved the way for this mundane trip that calls itself a send-up of the horror film.

An automobile that sucks blood from the driver's foot as he pumps the accelerator certainly sounds like it has potential (look at Stephen King's *Christine*.) But little happens in the course of 95 minutes—suspense is kept to a minimum, and there is little parody—two ingredients necessary to make horror comedies work effectively. Instead, Herz attempts to say something meaningful about industry's dehumanization of society. ● Les Paul Robley



Willard (Brent Huff) in the grip of the leather-clad gladiators of the Yik-Yak in THE PERILS OF GWENDOLINE.

HYSTERICAL

Directed by Chris Bearde. An HBO Cinema Group presentation, 1.85. With: Bill Hudson, Mark Hudson, Brett Hudson.

A 1982 horror spoof released directly to cable. The Hudson brothers try to recycle some Abbott and Costello Three Stooges schtick, but the only laughs are provided by Charlie Callas, as a manic Dracula and Murray Hamilton, still playing the mayor who refuses to close the beach to tourists. Richard Kiel looks great as a 100-year-old corpse brought back to life by the ghost of his mistress, Julie Newmar. The plot doesn't make much sense and is largely a frame on which to hang a bunch of one joke parodies and some limp physical humor. ○JPH

IMPULSE

With: Tim Matheson, Meg Tilly, Hume Cronyn, John Karlen, Claude Earl Jones, Bill Paxton, Amy Stryker.

A toxic substance, released during an earthquake, contaminates water used to prepare milk at a small town dairy. Everyone drinks the milk except Meg Tilly; and suddenly they are compelled to act out their deepest urges. No one has good urges in this town of 900 people, so pretty soon there are a lot of deaths. This could have been suspenseful, but in the hands of director Graham Baker, it's 90 minutes of unrelieved tedium. ○JPH

MAKING OF INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM

Directed by Frank Marshall. PBS Lucasfilm, 12.84, 52 mins. With: Steven Spielberg, Harrison Ford, Kate Capshaw, and other cast and crew members.

Pledge week on PBS. Time for another making of documentary. There is less documentary than actual footage from the film. There are brief glimpses of the dimensional animation during the mine car sequence and extended coverage of the insect scene. Most interesting to effects buffs was a marvelously articulated life size animatronic dummy for the fire pit sequence, which was all but obliterated in the final print. An interesting insight into how a big budget effects laden film is put together. ●●JPH

THE MASKS OF DEATH

Directed by Roy Ward Baker. Tyburn Productions, 12.84 (U.K. TV), 82 mins. With: Peter Cushing, John Mills, Anton Diffring, Gordon Jackson.

Twenty-five years after first playing the role in Hammer's THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES, Peter Cushing returns as the world's greatest consulting detective, Sherlock Holmes. This well-made British TV movie is based on an original story by 'John Elder' (Hammer Films' Anthony Hinds) and directed by Roy Ward Baker (FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH, THE VAMPIRE LOVERS, etc.) Set in 1913, a very old Holmes and Watson (Sir John Mills) are called out of virtual retirement to investigate three terrified-looking corpses discovered in White chapel, political intrigue and a German plot to wipe out the population of London.

Made by Tyburn (who in the early 1970's produced THE GHUL and LEGEND OF THE WEREWOLF, both starring Cushing), the supporting cast includes a cameo by Ray Milland, Anton Diffring (as yet another German villain), Anne Baxter, and Susan Penhaligon. Although a bit slow and verbose at times, this is still better than most TV fodder. ●●Stephen Jones

A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET

With: John Saxon, Ronee Blakely, Heather Langenkamp, Amanda Wess.

Who would have ever expected that Wes Craven would turn out to be America's answer to Dario Argento? A killer who was immolated before the start of the story by four parents returns to haunt and kill their children in the children's dreams with a razor sharp claw and nightmarish abilities. This under \$2 million offering gives ample proof what a little bit of style and invention can do for a film. There's plenty of thrills and visual excitement in this, Craven's best film to date. ●●●DKF

1984

With: John Hurt, Richard Burton, Suzanna Hamilton, Cyril Cusack.

This film adaptation of George Orwell's classic work is far superior to the 1956 version. John Hurt (as Winston Smith) is made to resemble the tubercular Orwell at the time of the novel's writing, and the film is filled with 40's style technology emphasizing its faithfulness to Orwell's vision. The film is properly wistful and despairing in its depiction of a future where the facts of the past are altered to suit the needs of the present government in its battle to stay in power by oppressing the masses. Orwell's message that the masses believe what they are told to believe is as timely as ever. ●●●DKF

OH GOD, YOU DEVIL!

With: George Burns, Ted Wass, Ron Silver, Eugene Roche, Roxanne Hart.

The familiar plot of God and the Devil (George Burns in a dual role) vying for the soul of a washed-up composer (Ted Wass) has worn thin by now. The few things saving this from eternal damnation are Andrew Bergman's divine one-liners and their flawless delivery by Burns. Burns appears more at ease playing a cigar-toting promoter of potential demons than his usual retired deity, reduced to playing the slots at Vegas. Director Paul Bogart wisely lets the devil role dominate the story. ● Les Paul Robley

OTHERWORLD

With: Sam Groom, Gretchen Corbett, Tony O'Dell, Jonna Lee, Brandon Crane.

In 1977 there was a shortlived series created by Dorothy Fontana called FANTASTIC JOURNEY about a group of people who pass through a spacewarp and wind up in an alternate universe made up of different communities separated by wilderness. This is your basic rip-off. In episode 1, the family runs into androids (episode 3 of FANTASTIC JOURNEY). There are feeble attempts at humor, and a total absence of originality. On TV this junk passes for science fiction. Mattes by Syd Dutton are of interest. ○JPH

First two episodes have focused nicely on human drama, despite the SF clichés. ● FSC

AFTER THE FALL OF NEW YORK, an Italian post-holocaust tale.



The bloodsucking automobile in the Czechoslovakian FERAT VAMPIRE.



FILM RATINGS

PERILS OF GWENDOLINE IN THE LAND OF THE YIK YAK

With: Tawny Kitaen, Brent Huff, Zabou, Bernadette LaFont, Jean Rougeur.

Great poster, bad movie. Lush photography and interesting sets fail to save this comic strip adaptation, the ultimate T&A epic. Gwendoline and her cute companion, Beth (Zabou), travel to the orient in search of her missing father. White slavers, bizarre natives and a cult of female warriors block her path, but she triumphs with the help of a soldier of fortune. Mundane dubbing and a storyline too comic book-like for the movie screen help to sink a good idea. ● **DS**

RAZORBACK

Directed by Russell Mulcahy. A Warner Brothers release, 11/84, 94 mins. With: Gregory Harrison, Arkie Whiteley, Bill Kerr, Chris Haywood.

A movie about a killer boar the size of a rhinoceros would seem doomed from the start, but it is scripted by Everett DeRouche (Australia's greatest genre screenwriter), gorgeously photographed by Dean Semler (ROAD WARRIOR), is supported by superb second unit work, and is stylishly directed and sharply edited by rock video director Russell Mulcahy. It works well as a JAWS-on-land story. ●● **DKF**

RUNAWAY

With: Tom Selleck, Cynthia Rhodes, Gene Simmons, Kirstie Alley.

An entertaining thriller with moments that indicate it could have been more than that. There are two very good suspense scenes and some clever extrapolation of future technology in this story of a cop (Selleck) who must stop a madman capable of changing benign robotic servants into deadly killers. However, heat-seeking bullets and little superfast mobile bombs do not help to suspend disbelief. It's fun to watch, but becomes forgettable all too soon afterwards. ●● **DKF**

SILENT NIGHT, DEADLY NIGHT

Directed by Charles E. Sellier. Tri-Star, 11/84, 79 mins. With Robert Brian Wilson, Lilyan Chauhan, Gilmer McCormick, Toni Nero.

FRIDAY THE 13TH gore attempts to break into the lucrative Christmas box-office season. Unfortunately for Tri-Star, Santa Claus as butcher generated more heat than cash. When parents and civic groups objected to TV commercials depicting Santa Claus holding a gun, Tri-Star got embarrassed and withdrew the picture from release, supposedly due to poor boxoffice, though grosses were more than respectable.

Wilson plays a psycho, traumatized at an early age by seeing his family slain by a Santa-clad crook. After a long and unsavory buildup showing the boy growing up in the repressed atmosphere of a Catholic orphanage, the film switches gears and becomes just another mindless slasher film, as Wilson's mind snaps and he goes on the rampage. Snapsuit and all. Film generates a kind of perverse charm that could make it a cult item if it ever resurfaces. ● **FSC**

FILM TITLE	●●●●		●●●●		●●		●		○			
	MUST SEE	EXCELLENT	GOOD	MEDIOCRE	WORTHLESS	FSC	AM	JPH	DKF	BK	MM	DS
ALL OF ME / Carl Reiner Universal, 9/84, 93 mins.						●		●●●●		●●		●●●
BODY DOUBLE / Brian DePalma Columbia, 9/84, 109 mins.		●●●				●●●			●●	●		●●
BROTHER FROM ANOTHER PLANET / John Sayles Cinecom, 9/84, 104 mins.		●●	●			●●	●	●●	●●	●●●●		●●●
DREAMSCAPE / Joe Ruben Fox, 8/84, 98 mins.		●●●	○			●●●	○	●●●●	●●	●●		●●●
DUNE / David Lynch Universal, 12/84, 137 mins.			●	○		●	○	●●	●	●	●●●●	●●
THE EWOK ADVENTURE / John Korty ABC-TV, 11/84, 2 hours.				○		○	●	○	○	○		●
GHOULIES / Luca Bercovici Empire Pictures, 1/85.			●			●			●●			
IMPULSE / Graham Baker Fox, 9/84, 88 mins.				○		○	○	●	●●			
JUNGLE BOOK / Wolfgang Reitherman Buena Vista, 7/84 (re-release), 78 mins.				●●●●				●●●	●●			●●●
MUTANT / John Bud Cardos Film Ventures, 3/84.							○	○	○			●
A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET / Wes Craven New Line, 11/84, 91 mins.		●●●●	○		●●	●●●	●●	●●	●●	●●		●●
NIGHT OF THE COMET / Thom Eberhardt Atlantic Releasing, 10/84 100 mins.		●●●			●	●	●	●	●	●●		●
1984 / Michael Radford Atlantic Releasing, 12/84, 109 mins.		●●			●	●●●	●●	●●	●●●●			●●
OH GOD, YOU DEVILI / Paul Bogart Warner Bros, 11/84, 95 mins.		●	○		●●			●				
OTHERWORLD / William Graham CBS-TV, 1/26/85, 60 mins.			●	○		○	○			○		
PERILS OF GWENDOLINE / Just Jaeckin Samuel Goldwin Co., 1/85, 88 mins.			○					●	○	●●		●
PINOCCHIO / Sharpsteen & Luske Buena Vista, 12/84 (re-release), 88 mins.		●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●
RUNAWAY / Michael Crichton Tri-Star, 12/84, 99 mins.		●●●●			○	●●	●	●	●	●		●●
STARCROSSED / Jeffrey Bloom ABC-TV, 1/85, 100 mins.			●	●				●	●	●		
STARMAN / John Carpenter Columbia, 12/84, 115 mins.		●●	○		●●	●●	●●	●	●	●		●●
SUPERGIRL / Jeannot Szwarc Tri-Star, 11/84, 105 mins.			○			●	●			○		●●
TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE / Laurel Prod., 11/84, 30 mins.			○		●	●	●	●	●	●●		●
THE TERMINATOR / James Cameron Orion, 10/84, 94 mins.		●●●●	●●			●●	●●	●●	●●	●●●●		●●●
TERROR IN THE AISLES / Andrew Kuehn Universal, 10/84 82 mins.						●	●	●	●	●		○
2010 / Peter Hyams MGM/UA, 12/84, 115 mins.		●●●	●●●	●●	●●	●●●	○	○	○	○		●●●
V: SERIES / Paul Krasny, et. al. NBC-TV, 10/84, 60 mins.			●	●		○	●	○	○	○		●

FSC/Frederick S. Clarke AM/Allen Malmquist JPH/Judith P. Harris DKF/Dennis K. Fischer BK/Bill Kelley MM/Mike Mayo DS/Dan Scapperotti

STARCROSSED

With: James Spader, Belinda Bauer, Pete Kowanko, Ed Groenber.

Female alien falls for Earthling garage mechanic while fleeing space cops in a TV-movie variation of STARMAN, right down to the Voyager mission connection. The cops are a direct steal from John Sayles BROTHER FROM ANOTHER PLANET. Script and direction by the "auteur" of BLOOD BEACH are routine. Bauer and TUFF TURF's Spader as leads are the best thing in the film. ● **BK**

STARMAN

With: Jeff Bridges, Karen Allen, Charles Martin Smith, Richard Jaeckel.

Science fiction filmmaking taken to its most wonderful and banal extremes. It copies every

pulp contrivance in the books, but underneath its glittery surface lies a love story of profound humanity and depth. The plot often lapses into standard SF clichés that seem more appropriate in an episode of "Mork & Mindy." But there are also vivid scenes of mystical beauty which transcend the more mundane, commercial trappings expected in a big-budgeted adventure of this caliber. This may not yet be John Carpenter's magnum opus, but his love for the subject is more evident than most directors working with better scripts and even larger budgets. ●●● **Les Paul Robley**

A textbook case of trite. And of boredom. The basic lost alien premise, and much of the detail therein, was done better in THE QUESTOR TAPES, CLOSE ENCOUNTERS, etc. ○ **AM**

SUPERSTITION

Directed by James Roberson. An Almi Pictures film, 1/85, 85 mins. With: James Houghton, Albert Salmi, Lynn Carlin.

A cross between THE AMITYVILLE HORROR and THE DEVONSHIRE TERROR. In 1692 a witch was drowned; because only burning can kill a witch, she has been haunting around ever since, causing a series of violent deaths (effects makeup courtesy of William Munnis). These include decapitation, with the head blown up in a microwave, cutting in two at the waist, an electric saw through the chest and strangling on elevator cables. After this the scriptwriter's imagination failed and all the rest of the killings are offscreen, with only the bloody bodies showing up later. Made in 1982 without an ounce of suspense, the film has a number of grainy

scenes, lots of dead spots, and the world's least charismatic cast.

○ **JPH**

SWORD OF THE VALIANT

Directed by Stephen Weeks. A Cannon film, 11/84, 101 mins. With: Miles O'Keefe, Sean Connery, Peter Cushing.

This is Weeks' second low-budget try at the pre-Authurian legend of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, and if it's an improvement, I'd hate to see the first (which went unreleased outside Britain in the early 70's). All the main stars wear ill-fitting wigs, Connery (in an extended cameo) sports emerald greasepaint and sequined armor, and O'Keefe, who can barely stand upright in the hilarious action scenes, is even worse than in the Dereks' TARZAN. The tacky effects would do Bert I. Gordon proud. ○ **BK**

TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE

Director varies. A Laurel Series Production w/ Tribune Broadcasting, 9/84, 30 mins.

A syndicated, anthology horror series from George Romero's Pittsburgh studio, which gets away with plenty by staid, network TV standards—rotting corpses abound, and satan brands a victim's flesh "paid in full"—but is otherwise a campy collection of dull morality fables. ● **BK**

TERROR IN THE AISLES

With: Donald Pleasance, Nancy Allen.

Lethal, numbing clip documentary which fails to identify the films it loots, purveys dimstore psychology and sociology with an unctuous narration, puzzlingly includes several non-horror titles (e.g. MARATHON MAN) and finally is so unpleasant its cathartic premise backfires. ○ **BK**

2010

With: Roy Scheider, John Lithgow, Helen Mirren, Bob Balaban, Keir Dullea.

As with Arthur C. Clarke's novelization of 2001, 2010 gives a shade too many explanations; words reduce cosmic wonders. And turn valuable social themes into cheap heart-tugs. And yet this sequel, replacing philosophical openness and lyrical presentation with solid action and more touching characterization, with visualizations equal to its predecessor, comes off as a fine film in its own right. 2001 may burn brighter, but two such stars now shine. ●●● **AM**

ZOMBIE ISLAND MASSACRE

Directed by John N. Carter. A Troma film, 11/84, 87 mins. With: Rita Jenrette, David Broadnax, Tom Cantrell.

A low budget affair which, despite its lurid title, sustains an element of suspense. Filmed in 1983 as a showcase for Rita Jenrette, a hot news item at the time, the plot involves a Caribbean vacation which turns into a nightmare for a group of tourists when most of the cast is slaughtered on a trek through the jungle. Zombies are red herrings with warring drug rings the real culprits. Direction is pedestrian, acting is merely passable, but the film manages to hold interest. ● **DS**

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TERMINATOR

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that his prey can’t be visited. When he intones to the desk cop on duty “I’ll be back,” it is at once both funny and chilling. Especially when moments later his car comes crashing through the front door pinning the hapless patrolman to the wall in an orgy of flying glass and splintered wood.

The film flies along at breakneck speed with car chases, running gun fights and a massacre in a nightclub, detoured only occasionally by expository scenes between Sarah (Linda Hamilton) and Kyle (Michael Biehn).

Time travel tales are hardly new. Stories of men from the future leaping into the past go back to H.G. Wells as well as E.C. Comics. The *STAR TREK* episode “City On the Edge of Forever,” *THE FINAL COUNTDOWN*, and even Roger Corman’s *THE UNDEAD* lectured on the dangers of tampering with the past because of the unpredictable effect it may have on the future. The robots, fortunately, haven’t been watching those reruns.

Hamilton seems at first a bit too funky to be the modern madonna of the future savior, but by the end the ordeal has molded herself into a fitting survivor in a paradoxical twist on the time travel genre which proves that the super intelligent machines can make mistakes too. Sending a cyborg into the past to prevent the birth of Connor turns out to be the very act which precipitates that birth, changing the young woman, providing a father and giving her warning of the coming holocaust which enables her to save herself and her unborn child. The film’s epilogue nicely ties-up the loose ends.

Director James Cameron and producer Gale Anne Hurd did double duty on the film, having co-scripted the screenplay. If *TERMINATOR* seems like a very elaborate New World production it’s with good reason since both Cameron and Hurd are alumni of Corman’s old organization, a proving ground that has fostered a plethora of young filmmakers. Corman’s influence can also be felt with the inclusion of veteran character actor Dick Miller in a cameo as a gunshop salesman. If Corman graduates continue to use the actor, Miller will be working forever.

The special effects are nothing less than spectacular, especially the model and stop-motion work which brings the unrelenting Terminator back again and again even after Schwarzenegger’s countenance has left the screen. *HALLOWEEN*’s Michael Myers has nothing on this guy.

Stan Winston’s makeup effects, detailing the cyborg’s mixture of mechanics and human flesh are gruesome. When Schwarzenegger replaces an eye everyone in the audience shudders.

THE TERMINATOR is an example of science fiction horror at its best, intelligently integrating today’s high tech special effects with a viable, frightening story. Cameron’s non-nonsense approach will make him a sought-after commodity in an industry that has discovered big bucks in this type of entertainment. □

COMET

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few problems. The film sags when it gets into exposition about the motivations of the bad guys, which is never very interesting. Geoffrey Lewis and the marvelous Mary Woronov are neatly wasted in villainous roles, although some of Woronov’s kinky elegance is apparent in her final scene.

A shopping spree by Regina and Samantha that is a shrewd and sparkly reworking of the satirical aspects of *DAWN OF THE DEAD* becomes an excuse to place the girls in some contrived jeopardy at the hands of murderous, Devoesque department store stockboys. Eberhardt allows Ivan Roth’s performance as the leader to go over the top: Roth postures wildly and sounds like Margaret Hamilton with a testosterone problem.

Further, Eberhardt’s eclecticism gets the best of him once or twice, notably during a purposely misdirected dream sequence that swipes one of the best moments of *AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON*. We cineastes love seeing Kelli Maroney in her underwear, but the segment is too protracted to be effective even as a ripoff; it does not advance the story and was clearly included only because something similar worked well in another film.

These complaints are not mere quibbles, but they are not fatal, either. The film will be remembered in large part for its wit and genuine eeriness. Dreamlike views of the deserted Los Angeles are achieved with a simple red filter. Editor Fred Stafford’s rapid, rhythmic cutting of cinematographer Arthur Albert’s images is underscored by pulsing rock music, giving the impression of a city-wide rock video that nobody showed up for.

More intimate views of the effect of the comet are no less discomfiting: automatic lawn sprinklers chugging away on cue, a rubber duck that floats in a silent swimming pool, a child’s bicycle fallen in a deserted schoolyard. These are classic SF images that made me think not only of movies like *TARGET EARTH*, but of subtly disturbing films like *VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED*.

John Muto’s production design is canny and evocative, particularly in the deserted radio station that draws the protagonists together, a cube-like womb of black and violet that glows with slender streaks and squibs of colored neon. Muto’s designs for the villains’ desert headquarters are suitably bleak and menacing, and are given impressive scope beyond the means of the film’s modest budget by visual effects supervisor Ted Rac.

But *COMET*’s greatest virtue, inarguably, is its treatment of Samantha and Regina. The girls are human, which means that they are not merely amusing and pretty, but resourceful, occasionally petty, and capable of growth. Maroney, for instance, has an earnest monologue that is rich with honest emotion and regret.

I adored these girls, but I respected them, too. Perhaps now, at last, movie SF can overthrow the Queen of Outer Space and get on with the lives and feelings of the *real* people. □

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VISUAL EFFECTS for **THE TITAN FIND** are the work of the L.A. Effects Group, headed by Larry Benson. Left: The Shenendoah, the United States rescue ship, is shown approaching Titan, the largest moon of Saturn, and landing in its turbulent, dust-filled atmosphere. The film's effects work is designed by Robert Skotak and photographed by Dennis Skotak. When the Shenendoah lands, it cracks the surface of Titan and falls into caverns below. The film opens in selected markets March 11 from Cardinal Distributors.

THE TITAN FIND

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actually like," he said. "Everything's got this sort of Dante's Inferno look to it. There are these tremendous lightning storms going on all the time. The picture almost winds up looking like gothic horror. In fact, when we designed the miniatures, that was the instruction, make them look like Dracula's castle. From the dailies, someone said they thought it looked like a Mario Bava picture, which I take as a compliment."

To get the most out of the sets and special effects, Malone decided to shoot in widescreen Panavision. "A space picture practically demands that kind of format," said Malone. "I had to do some fast talking because most of the people involved didn't want to go anamorphic. Initially it's a pain in the ass to deal with the Panavision company. If you're not a major company, they tend to want all their money up front, and that's very hard to deal with, but once we had set the deal with them, they were easier to get along with. Using Panavision really paid off in the long run, because it gives the picture a bigger look. With Panavision, you gain about 40 percent in image area, and it tremendously improves the image and clarity. This is only my first Panavision picture, but after working with it, you get kind of spoiled."

One group that found it a little harder to work up enthusiasm for the widescreen format were the people involved in physically producing the special effects for the film, the year-old L.A. Effects Group headed by Larry Benson. The company includes Alan Markowitz, director of animation and optical effects, and Corman effects graduates Robert and Dennis Skotak. Robert serves as director of visual effects while brother Dennis is director of photography.

"The single biggest problem we had was the anamorphic format," said Dennis Skotak. "Bill Malone likes widescreen, and I like widescreen, but for a limited budget, it's a problem. It's real hard to force depth-of-field because you have to have a great deal of light to close the camera aperture down.

"Because the budget was so low on this picture, we had a limit on how much time could be spent building

the models. The ships are not large enough for a lot of the things that are necessary. One of the producers wanted a shot of the Shenendoah much closer than what we had planned it to be. I had to pull out the bag of tricks to get it done. We had to have the ship so close to the camera that it was grazing the film magazine."

Surprises and difficulties were in store for the live action crew as well. No sooner had Malone worked out the storyline for the film and started work on the script when his backers threw him a curve. To help give the film a stronger selling point, his investors had gotten a "name" actor, Klaus Kinski. The problem was that they only had Kinski for a week, and there wasn't a part in the film that would suit him.

"Previously, we had clues in the original story as to what happened in the German ship, and the audience was supposed to draw its own conclusions," Malone said. "But once we had Klaus, it seemed the best thing to do was make him the commander of the German ship and work from there. I think he enjoyed working on the film, but it was very hard to tell. He's got an unusual personality. He worked with me on his part in the script, and actually, I think he would make a very good story editor. He was very helpful with suggestions and with working with the other actors. I

think it helped everyone else too because they really seemed to be working harder because they were working with him.

"You have to understand that this movie has turned out to be a lot bigger picture than we set out to make. We started out small, but after the second week of shooting, the investors looked at the footage and said they loved it and wanted us to make it bigger and better, so they kept throwing money at us, which is really a filmmaker's dream. We're using a Dolby stereo soundtrack, which isn't something we were originally designed for. When we put together a rough cut of the movie, we decided it would add a lot to the film, even though it was going to cost another \$80,000."

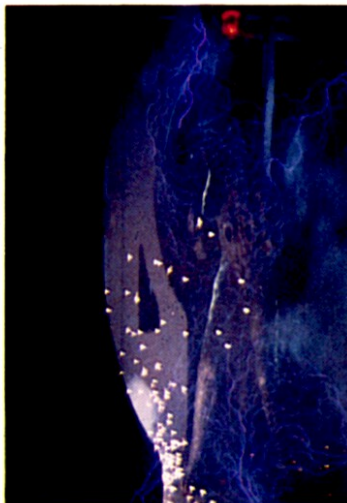
Aside from the technical aspects of the film, Malone knows he's going to run into two objections about the film: is it an ALIEN ripoff, and how much SCARED TO DEATH gore is there in the film that's really necessary?

"About the gore, I tend to sort of pull back in that area," he said. "There are some dramatic scenes that have some gore in them, but I think that if you do it all the way through, then it loses its punch. My basic approach is that I really like suspense more than gore, but the problem is that you have to remember that we

also have to try and sell the movie overseas. There are countries that won't buy your picture without a certain amount of gore in it. Look at the Italian zombie movies, and Japanese kid shows, they have people getting hacked to pieces and arrows that go through eyes... that sort of stuff, so you have to have some pretty heavy-weight material in your picture for them to be interested in it."

"I don't know what to say about the ALIEN question," Malone continued. "I guess it depends on whether you consider ALIEN an original story. I don't look at that many films as real originals. I know ALIEN had elements of several films in it that I could name, but beyond that, most genre films are pretty derivative. I think that THE TITAN FIND has got some unusual and interesting things in it. Certainly the film is going to be compared to other films, but I don't think you can help that. I actually think there's a lot more of 1950's science fiction in it than anything else, and that it resembles ALIEN because Dan O'Bannon and myself were probably inspired by the same pictures. I like Spielberg's JAWS also. I think it's probably one of the best monster movies ever made; when I was writing Klaus Kinski's part, I wanted to try and capture more of the feel of Robert Shaw's part in that, than ALIEN." □

Middle: The trapped astronauts electrocute Titan's alien menace. Left: Robert Skotak's creature design. Right: An early concept.



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2010

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six year-old knows that sound cannot travel in space, Hyams' gives us a black void where spaceship engines roar in six-track Dolby sound, explosions pummel sensitive eardrums, and gas-bag heat shields inflate with a *pop* that would wake the dead back on Earth. Dr. Richard Terrile, of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, is listed as the technical advisor for 2010, but it appears he must have been securely bound and gagged if ever physically present on the set. This disregard for even the most elementary rules of hard SF is what gives 2010 its aura of ragged carelessness. The film stands as a prime example of how today's cinema is "dumbed up;" assuming a large portion of moviegoers are too ignorant to comprehend it otherwise.

2010's few bright spots emanate from its core of brilliant actors. The film's director, unfortunately, has added little depth or shading to the movie's human aspects, and one begins to feel that astute casting more than directorial skill is what provides 2010 with its feeble spark of life. Roy Scheider is good as Heywood Floyd, a man just getting his life back on line after some turbulent times, yet still tormented by an unexpressed guilt which erodes even his family life. British actress Helen Mirren is wasted as Russian commander Tanya Kirbuk and it is a tribute to her personal charisma that she manages to transcend cliché material and create something like a character. John Lithgow works his usual magic as American engineer Walter Curnow. Lithgow redeems any part, no matter how small, and his spacephobic Curnow is a minor gem. Bob Balaban also shines as Dr. Chandra, the human brain behind Hal 9000. Balaban's intense presence lends a three-dimensional shadow to what could have been a one-dimensional role.

A cast of Soviet emigres portrays the remainder of the *Leonov* crew, but they too are given short shrift by the screenplay. The notable exception is actor Elya Baskin who brings a delightful comedic flair into play as Max Brailovsky, a laid-back cosmonaut whose shaky grasp of English slang makes for some amusing moments between he and Curnow. There's more than a little irony in the fact that 2010's most human and humane character is HAL 9000 (Douglas Rain). Unfortunately, the appearance of the legendary super-computer is all too brief.

There are enough frustratingly good moments in 2010 to remind us how good it could have been: a hair-raising sequence in which an automated probe explores the ice-bound moon Europa for signs of life (ruined, incidentally, by the inclusion of unnecessary pyrotechnics); a tender moment between Floyd and a Soviet crewmember (Natasha Schneider) who seeks chaste comfort in his arms as the *Leonov* slows its trajectory by streaking through Jupiter's upper atmosphere; some intimations of humanity as Floyd and Kirbuk get drunk on contraband Kentucky whiskey while exchanging details about their families; any scene involving

the re-activated Hal 9000.

Richard Edlund's special effects also deserve mention: they are a wonder to behold. Scenes of the planet Jupiter were created by feeding Voyager mission data into a powerful Cray computer, a technique that conjures up a mesmerizingly real image of the swirling gas giant. One scene especially, in which an alien-created black hole engulfs Jupiter, should rank as one of the classic effects sequences in SF film history.

Nevertheless, the movie's highs are too few to compensate for its lows. Hyams lays on his peace-brotherhood message with an earth-mover, announcing the meaning of his film with a fanfare only slightly less grandiose than the one which will herald the Second Coming. 2010's last five minutes are so startlingly inept as to be laughable.

Still, the film's central fault lies not with its maker but with the very idea to sequelize 2001, a cinematic milestone whose power derives primarily from its ambiguity. Here the monolith and the star-child were the outward manifestations of a deeper cosmic mystery, necessarily cloaked in symbolism because they exceeded all human expression. Their impenetrability afforded us a glimpse not of the ETs themselves, but of the unbreachable gulf that lies between mind and supermind. In attempting to answer those questions left unanswered in 2001, writer Arthur C. Clarke has finally come up against his own limits, rendering the very aliens he helped create as pedestrian and disappointing. □

HYAMS ON 2010

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modest, Hyams felt it placed some constraints on the production. "The budget is substantially less than a number of genre films, by half," Hyams asserted. He continued, only partly joking, "I think that has shortened all our lives, because every *little* thing became important." Above all, Hyams had to face the daunting challenge of how to create special effects worthy of Clarke's sprawling vision of Jupiter.

One of Hyam's first acts was to place a call to northern California. "When I came to the horrible conclusion that I actually had to make this film, I called Richard Edlund, who was still up north at I.L.M. (Industrial Light and Magic, George Lucas' special effects facility north of San Francisco)," Hyams recalled.

Feeling constrained by Lucas' creative approach, Edlund had decided to go out on his own. He had purchased the EEG (Entertainment Effects Group) facility in Los Angeles from Douglas Trumbull (renaming it Boss Film Corp.—BFC) and left northern California lock, stock, and models, taking with him many of the creative minds who had made I.L.M. unparalleled in the field of special effects.

"Thank God he was able to come here," said Hyams. "I would not have made the film without Richard, or if the effects process had to be done at I.L.M. hundreds of miles away. When I called, he was, in fact, packing." □

KURAN

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People wouldn't talk to me and started treating me like I wasn't there anymore. I packed my things and went back to Los Angeles."

Kuran found plenty to do when he got back. Jon Davison, who knew Kuran from PIRANHA, contacted him on behalf of Avco Embassy to work on THE HOWLING. Avco was putting together a teaser reel for the annual National Alliance of Theatre Owners convention in New Orleans and asked Kuran to supply an animated title sequence for the demo. Kuran obliged, coming up with the ripped lettering that was so effective.

"Just to show you how cheap a producer Mike Finnell was, he decided that since he already had the title sequence from the trailer, he was going to use it for the film titles. He didn't want to pay me any more for it, but he wanted me to redo the title and take out a little dot I had left between the O and W in the trailer. To keep the guy happy, although I don't know why I wanted to, I went back and reshot it and removed the little dot."

VCE also did a five foot wide by ten foot long horizontal matte painting for the lovemaking/transformation scene in the film. They went on to do the spinning newspaper montage for AIRPLANE as well as a sequence of a passenger setting fire to himself that was deemed too realistic and grisly and was cut from the film.

VCE's next assignment, FEAR NO EVIL (10:3:14), was to prove an important step for the company in that what they learned producing the opticals would be carried over, with further improvements, into their dazzling work on DRAGONSLAYER. Director Frank LaLoggia had bid out the film to several companies, but wanted VCE in particular because he felt they had an enthusiasm for the project that other special effects companies didn't. The assignment was to provide a unique problem for VCE in that there were really no visual precedents for the kinds of effects LaLoggia wanted.

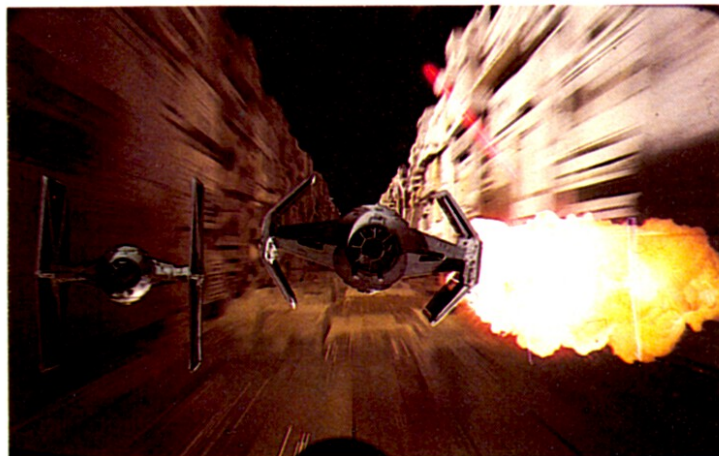
"LaLoggia wanted the cross in the film to 'come alive' and glow and radiate energy. We had to give the effects an ethereal 'personality' which represented the basic struggle of good against evil. For a climactic scene, three archangels gather to-

VCE effects for BUCKEROO BANZAI: animation as Banzai's Overthruster bumps into a Lectroid (left) and a blue screen composite of the Lectroid ship (right).



L O R D O F L I G H T • P E T E R K U R A N

"They would project my dailies on DRAGONSLAYER and then ILM's, and the director would say 'Look at the way Kuran can get these subtleties in his shots. How come you can't do that?' This made real enemies at ILM."



Kuran got his start, at age 18, animating the laser beams seen in STAR WARS.

gether as one fluid entity under a heavenly beacon and slowly dissolve into the light. To be able to see all of the figures transposed over one another, we wound up having to reverse the process you normally use in optical printing. LaLoggia wanted as much of a three-dimensional quality as possible."

Dragonslayer

FEAR NO EVIL didn't do well at the box office, but it did give Kuran the sense that his company and its abilities had finally come to maturity. "It helped me establish certain methods of optical printing, and of doing it in large batches, which helped on DRAGONSLAYER. I like to think that the subtleties I achieved on DRAGONSLAYER were the result of working on FEAR NO EVIL, even though the earlier assignment never quite reached that level."

ILM was contracted to do the visual effects for DRAGONSLAYER (10:1:33, 11:3:46), but the amount of miniature and optical effects proved staggering. It became apparent that

ILM's facilities were being severely overtaxed between its work on the film and RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK. In order to meet a summer 1981 release date, the production was going to have to subcontract some of the optical effects. Although ILM was familiar with Kuran's work, he was not who they wanted, and getting the job required some hustling on his part.

"I was looking for work for VCE and was talking with Jim Bloom, the associate producer on EMPIRE, with whom I had maintained connections. He told me they were working on DRAGONSLAYER and RAIDERS and that he thought the producer on DRAGONSLAYER was probably looking to farm out about 40 shots. The producer, Hal Barwood, had enough foresight to realize certain shots they wanted were just not going to get done at ILM. Barwood had talked to 'the powers that be' at ILM, namely Dennis Muren and Brian Johnson, about who would be good for doing some animation shots, and of course they didn't think of me at all.

"I called Barwood and said that I had worked at ILM and if he was interested, I'd love to do his shots. Hal confronted Dennis Muren, and said 'What about Pete Kuran for these shots?' There's one thing about Dennis Muren, if he's hit with something he *knows* is the right thing to do, he just says, 'Gee, that sounds like a good idea to me.' So I went up there, and they gave me about 45 shots. It was the first time I was able to work freelance for ILM. It was also the first time that ILM came up against me putting in subtle animation and being able to do it with techniques other than what they were using. It generated some animosity because ILM was trying to put in flares and subtleties in some of

their shots. They would project my dailies and then ILM's and Mathew Robbins, the director would say 'Look at the way Kuran can get these subtleties in his shots. How come you can't do that?' This made real enemies at ILM. I think at that point ILM stopped liking the director. I think he was hurting himself by saying things like that."

What Kuran had done was develop his own techniques for using mattes and film stocks to add subtle lighting highlights into areas of a scene where real-time physical lighting would have been difficult or impossible. Kuran didn't want his effects to stand out and tried to approximate the lighting we see in the real world. His idea was that if it did look like something we've seen before, we'd be more likely to believe it on the screen.

One astonishing effect was an animated fire in a crucible reflected in the face of wizard Ralph Richardson, done by Susan Turner, that was virtually indistinguishable from the real thing. VCE then topped that by blending and modifying live action footage that was supposed to be a column of whirling flame. The live action didn't work well at all, and Kuran added animation to a short loop of the live action fire and blended it into a beautiful effect.

Ironically, one of the effects that Barwood and Robbins wanted was difficult to get because their equipment worked against it. Robbins wanted a lot of lens flares in the film. The problem? Most of the camera lenses available were engineered and designed to create as little flare as possible. Kuran found that the only way to get the flares that Barwood

Effects meet Kung Fu: VCE's work for THE SWORDSMAN, which Kuran hopes to re-release in a U.S.-dubbed version.



wanted in the places he wanted them was to do the flares mostly with post-production animation.

Although a skillfully crafted accomplishment in almost all departments, DRAGONSLAYER turned turtle at the box office and became a \$21 million dud whose astonishing special effects remain largely unseen.

Working on RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK at ILM was John Van Vliet, whom Kuran had hired at ILM to work on THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK. "He was chiefly responsible for devising the methods and creating the 'look' of the ghosts and demons in RAIDERS, from the use of animation to the use of puppets. No one there ever gave him credit for 'saving' the effects since they were his ideas. At the time, I was back in Los Angeles and every night he would call and I'd give him moral support and technical support for his work. Shortly after RAIDERS was finished, ILM laid him off, which I think was a terrible thing to do to someone who contributed so much to their efforts."

Kuran's next assignment was again for ILM, doing the phaser beams and transporter beam for STAR TREK II: THE WRATH OF KHAN (12:5/12:6:62). "I got the work on STAR TREK II because Paramount had given the job to ILM and they hadn't come up with anything. I think ILM hired me more because they had to, than they wanted to."

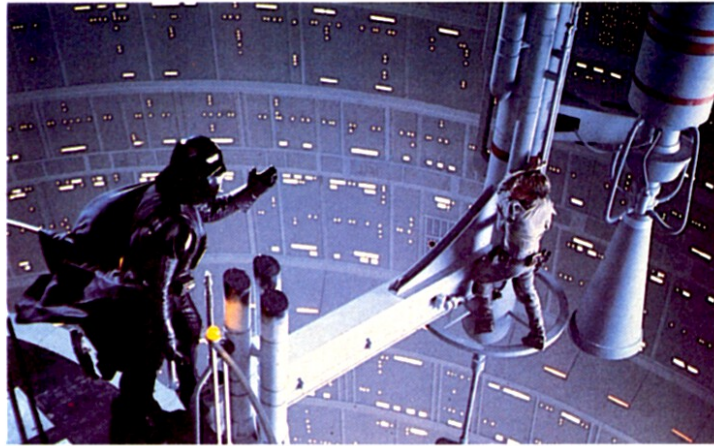
Kuran next did the ghosts and opticals for CONAN THE BARBARIAN (12:2/12:3:58,63) before turning to one of the flashiest jobs VCE has produced, the opening spaceship sequence and credits for John Carpenter's \$18 million remake of THE

VCE's evocative, imaginative work for DREAMSCAPE: Dennis Quaid mentally heals his wound (top) and a Dante's-eye view of post-holocaust Washington D.C.



L O R D O F L I G H T • P E T E R K U R A N

"The people at Lucasfilm are a very tight community. If you're not part of their workforce, it's like you're some sort of germ. They have a certain air about them. You just know that they want you to drop dead."



VCE's optical effects for RETURN OF THE JEDI included its laser sword climax.

THING (13:2/13:3:56). Since Kuran doesn't believe the amount of motion control photography work he might get would be worth the cost of purchasing a unit to do it, he doesn't have a motion control camera. The spaceship photography for THE THING was done at John Dykstra's Apogee facility.

Return of the Jedi

After THE THING, Kuran again worked freelance for Lucasfilm on optical shots for RETURN OF THE JEDI. The work went smoothly and Kuran was happy... until he saw the credits.

"The more they hire me, the less they want to give me credit for. On JEDI, VCE did about 102 shots, mostly laser sword shots and other opticals. They gave my company credit after Monaco Film Labs, the company that processed the film that ILM shot. I called them up and complained about it.

"I think there has always been an animosity towards me by ILM because I was one of the few people who left them and was able to stay in the business. I think some of them felt it questioned their success. A lot of them are closet entrepreneurs who want to have their own business, but the people at Lucasfilm are a very tight community. If you're not part of their workforce, it's like you're some sort of germ. When you're dealing with them, they have a certain air about them... you just know they want you to drop dead. I did some opticals for them on INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM, and this time VCE didn't get any credit."

Despite the ups and downs of the film business, Kuran and VCE have managed to keep their work before the public, although much of it is

hard to single out and identify on screen. On GREMLINS, VCE did the shadow-shot where the Gremlins are seen bouncing up and down as shadows against the theatre screen. The footage was rear-projected and had flicker added to it, then the footage was rephotographed when the live action was shot. Kuran also set up the background plate for the gremlin animation scene where all the gremlins are seen coming down the street.

For BUCKAROO BANZAI, VCE set up all the original blue screen work and added bits and pieces throughout the movie, including the electrical sparkle added to the sequence when Banzai's Overthruster breaks through the 8th dimension and bumps into a Lectroid, the blue Overthruster beam, and the model-work showing the Jet Car coming out of the mountain.

The summer of 1984 saw something rare at VCE... quiet. Kuran took advantage of the lull in work schedules to do some long overdue housecleaning. Material going back to THE DARK was cleaned out and a new stage area was set up just in time for Kuran to begin a new round of work. He balanced his dislike for commercials with their fast turnaround time and quick payoff and finally started doing them. His relationship with Lucasfilm also continued with VCE undertaking some of the special effects work on Lucasfilm's television venture, THE EWOK ADVENTURE.

"Lucasfilm asked me for a price and the quote I gave them was half of what ILM would charge. That's easy to do; I can charge less and still make a profit. They said that's great, then they called back and said they should try to keep the stuff in-house. They called back a couple of months later, with more work than they had originally talked about. I asked if this was

another crank call where I'm promised a lot of work so I'll figure out a budget then told to get lost? Rose Duignan said no, this time it's for real."

VCE supplied animation for the magical lake that sucks down anything dropped into it, and inserted a live-action element into the scene of the spinning top. Most of the work involved lasers or glows

which have become VCE's stock in trade.

"I was pleasantly surprised to see VCE given a fair credit on the show. Although I'm sometimes upset with Lucasfilm, I suppose that overall they've done more good for me than anyone."

VCE has also expanded into television with effects for Michael Nesmith's upcoming show based on his ELEPHANT PARTS music video and titled TELEVISION PARTS. Kuran jumped at the assignment because he admired REPO MAN which Nesmith had executive produced. "He's the guy with the wool cap from THE MONKEES. His mom invented Liquid Paper."

In between jobs Kuran has adopted a pet project, preparing an American version of a Chinese film he worked on for the Shaw Brothers in 1981 called DEMONS OF THE MAGIC MOUNTAIN. Kuran has retitled it THE SWORDSMAN. It's about the adventures of a young 13th century army scout who runs up against an evil wizard, demons, magic, and other nasty things. Despite the sometimes haphazard storyline, the film is a colorful and energetic affair with a nice sense of fun, with beautiful, massive sets, and a plethora of optical effects by VCE. The film received only a limited, subtitled release in America and Kuran thinks that with new dialog and musical tracks, and

THE DAY TIME ENDED (1978): Kuran went broke doing the film's ambitious optical effects on a shoestring budget.



some additional work, the film could be successfully released to a broader audience.

Kuran screened a twenty minute demonstration reel of *THE SWORDS-MAN* at the 1984 World Science Fiction Convention in Los Angeles and garnered a loud round of applause. The Chinese producers have shown little interest in the project, so Kuran is looking for the backing to finish the project himself.

Despite the ups and downs of the film business, Kuran and his VCE company have not only managed to survive, but prosper. "I guess the way my company is structured, it really does things in the most off-the-wall way possible," he summed-up. "There's usually something goofy or abstract in the way we make shots because we're always looking for a way to work without having to use a lot of expensive equipment like motion control cameras. On *DREAM-SCAPE*, the effects cost \$350,000, but for that they got over 90 shots, and I don't think producer Bruce Cohn Curtis could have gotten as much for the money from anyone else." □

CRICHTON

continued from page 6

these mistakes, and finally they bring it to a laboratory which could make it all worse, and it's just by the skin of their teeth they avoid a disaster. That's what the story says, only people don't see it that way."

WESTWORLD, shot for a mere \$1.5 million in 1973, proved to be an unexpected success for Crichton and clearly established that he was capable of both writing and directing a feature. Crichton was asked if he would be interested in making a sequel, but declined.

Crichton went on to write novels, including *Eaters of the Dead* and *The Great Train Robbery*, but he began to get the urge to return to filmmaking. "I had been involved with historical fiction, and so I was intrigued with doing something contemporary. It seemed to me that *COMA* would be a very good suspense movie, and so I wrote the screenplay. That's the only time it hasn't been my project entirely; however, I would like to do more things I haven't originated. It was very pleasant to work on the film because the studio had already bought the project and wanted to make a movie, aggressively going forward with it. The usual battles that I've had to fight with my own work were not there." Additionally, *COMA* brought Crichton in contact with *RUNAWAY* star Tom Selleck, who had a small role.

However, not all of Crichton's film experiences have been as pleasant. *THE TERMINAL MAN* was adapted into an unsatisfying film by director Mike Hodges in 1974. And *LOOKER* (1981) was originally intended to be a comedy, but the studio insisted that it should be a suspense melodrama. While Crichton was able to direct an entertaining version of his novel *The Great Train Robbery*, his project *CONGO*, originally written to be a film, never got off the ground at 20th Century-Fox (though he did manage to make it another best-selling novel).

"*CONGO* was sold before it was written," Crichton said. "It's a very bizarre story. 20th Century-Fox still owns it. I worked on many scripts for five years, and Fox had already undergone four changes of management and one change of ownership by the time the book came out. When I came to actually do the film, the producer went on to be president of MGM/UA, and it was just too late for it. Everyone had moved on and lost interest in it. It would have been an inordinately expensive movie, and I don't think it will ever be done."

Crichton began production of *RUNAWAY* in December 1983 on the various "mechanical creatures" that appear in the film, with shooting in late May. The props were built mostly in Los Angeles, with some being constructed in British Columbia by National Robotics. To get the look he wanted, Crichton selected Vancouver for location shooting. Because hero Jack Ramsey (Tom Selleck) has a fear of heights, Crichton wanted a "very vertical city."

"I think the audience will have no idea how complicated *RUNAWAY* really is, because it's designed to conceal its complexity," said Crichton. "In some movies, you say 'Wow! Look at that blue screen shot! Wow! How many elements did they put in to composite it?' We tried to do it so that you won't even notice, as if it were real. There's about 100 optical effects in the film, and I hope nobody notices. It's a slightly different aesthetic that we are working for."

Unfortunately, Crichton's *RUNAWAY* got lost in a crowded field of science fiction movies when released last December, unable to compete with better promoted films like *DUNE*, 2010, and *STARMAN*. Or maybe the film foundered simply because it was so different.

Said Crichton, "In *RUNAWAY*, everybody got not to do the things that they were famous for. Tom Selleck got not to have long hair. Gene Simmons, a member of the rock group *KISS*, got not to sing. And, Cynthia Rhodes of *FLASHDANCE* and *STAYING ALIVE* got not to dance." Such is the price for being unconventional. □

ALL OF ME

continued from page 51

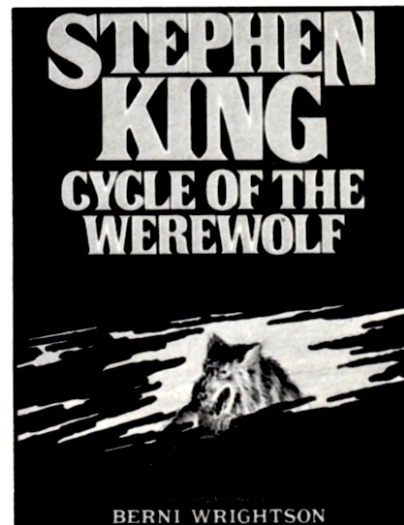
(the first time he hears Edwina's voice coming out of his mouth, he thinks he's picking up *GENERAL HOSPITAL* in his fillings, a line he treats with a sly, throwaway delivery), but when he's given the chance to indulge in his forte, physical comedy, he's astonishing. (There are times when he appears to be a marionette, with the strings manipulated off-camera.) His herky-jerky movements as he fights Edwina for control of his body or he slaps himself (through her) to wake up after a late night are startlingly original, and give the film moments of comic madness that save it from being a complete shambles.

There are, however, other times—such as in the courtroom scene—where even Martin's gifts can't overcome the stupidity of the dialogue and Carl Reiner's "let-him-run-wild" direction. And one must still

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MOVIE PREVIEW

You can't see *SILVER BULLET*, the movie being made of Stephen King's *Cycle of the Werewolf*, until next summer. But you can see the book now, in the imaginative art of comic-book artist Bernie Wrightson (right). When first published in hard-cover, this King & Wrightson horror gem became a valuable, sought after collector's item. Now it is available in a large format 6X9 paperback edition with all of Wrightson's fully detailed black and white and full color illustrations. Plus, you receive a special Wrightson bookplate, signed by the artist. \$8.95



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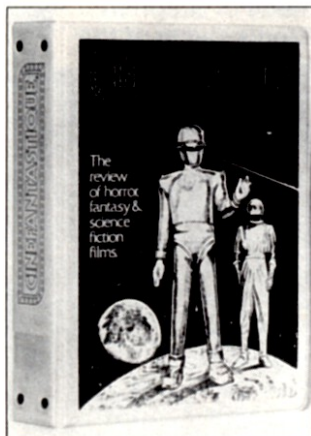
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take Martin to task for his consistent selection of sophomoric material. Why is he so afraid to be funny and sophisticated?

The joke is that whenever Roger looks into a mirror, he sees Edwina staring back at him in a make-up compact at her funeral, in the men's lavatory at work (some decent laughs here, albeit easy ones), while shaving in his bathroom. The film might have been more enjoyable if it had offered some skillful special effects to showcase this other-worldly hook-up of souls, but nothing clever is ever attempted. Tomlin simply stands in front of what appears to be your basic two-way glass, talking to Martin, sometimes mimicking his movements (such as when she contorts her mouth and tongue to aid him in shaving), most times not. Either Reiner felt it would be too time-consuming to have them mirror each other's movements or there wasn't sufficient rehearsal time; either way it's inconsistent and makes him look like a lazy and unimaginative director. (Humor and pathos blended nicely in THE COMIC with Dick Van Dyke, but Reiner directed that in 1969—years before he joined up with Steve Martin and forsook artistry for easy money.)

That ALL OF ME leaves a bad aftertaste is not simply because it is a dumb vehicle, largely unworthy of Martin and Tomlin, but because the actors have (presumably) unwittingly become party to a film that has a streak of nastiness running through-out it. It's bad enough that Hindus are made to look like blubbery morons (although Libertini is amusing as Prahka) and reincarnation is dismissed as a "wacko" idea (once again, a movie encourages its audience to snicker at something simply because it is foreign to most of us), but there's a frightening underlying message in Phil Alden Robinson's script about masculine and feminine roles that should not be dismissed simply because ALL OF ME bills itself as a farce.

Witness the change in Roger/Martin once Edwina/Tomlin takes over the right side of his body: he sashays down the lobby of his office building, yells a Monroesque "yoo-hoo!" to get someone's attention, egotistically runs his Edwina-controlled right hand through his hair, turns pages of a telephone book with his pinky extended, gingerly shifts his car's gears, and impulsively takes boss Dana Elcar's arm—behavior largely (and inexplicably) ignored by those close to him.

All this, it seems, are the filmmaker's ideas of how a woman behaves (flighty, emotional, vain), yet Edwina/Tomlin in no way behaves or speaks like such a stereotypical female. Therefore, we are left with the implication that Martin is acting like an effeminate man, and that any man who displays what are traditionally considered to be "feminine" traits deserves to be laughed at and ridiculed. (Martin, however, can walk the line in confidence, since he's got a pre-sold audience as a safety net—they know he's really not *that* way. Real men not only don't eat quiche, the film says between the lines, they don't fuss with their hair or extend a

friendly arm to a co-worker.)

When Edwina's transference into Tennant's body is successfully completed, Roger takes Tennant into his arms and they begin a ballroom dance which closes the film. (A pan to a nearby full-length mirror reveals it is Tomlin dancing with Martin.) This may be the one charming and good-natured scene in all of ALL OF ME. Allowed to simply trust their own instincts and spontaneously express themselves, the stars display evidence of comic chemistry that heretofore has eluded them in this pairing. Judging from the smiles on their faces, they look like they're having a helluva good time, too. Such is the nature of private jokes like ALL OF ME. □

EWOK ADVENTURE

continued from page 49

THE JEDI, who help them rescue their parents, suspended in a cage in the Gorax's cave, where he presumably intends to devour them.

Without commercials, THE EWOK ADVENTURE runs about 100 minutes, the standard length of a made-for-television movie. But its origins as a planned one-hour special (minus commercials, barely 50 minutes) are painfully obvious from the meager plot. No substantive attempt has been made to flesh out the barren narrative; the script by Bob Carrau (a young USC graduate and Lucasfilm employee, working from an outline by Lucas himself) introduces lame bits of comedic "business" and slapstick to pad-out the trek to the Gorax's lair.

The film would seemingly tax the attention span of even the most slavish young devotee of Lucas' films, so its absence of dramatic momentum and an imaginative, fully developed teleplay are easily its key disappointments. It panders not to a young audience, but to a catatonic one. Kory, a competent director of films pivoting on strong character relationships (including two fine TV productions, THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MISS JANE PITTMAN and A CHRISTMAS WITHOUT SNOW, in which he extracted an atypically restrained performance from John Houseman), basically acts as referee here, just as Irvin Kershner and Richard Marquand's films were visually loaded, over-the-top, cinematic rollercoasters, while EWOK substitutes nothing for its technical paucity. Its effects are still better than those in the average TV fantasy movie—it cost a reputed \$4.5 million, twice the budget for a movie-of-the-week—but the average TV movie is plot heavy with love triangles and other character intertwinings, inserted because its producers know they cannot hang their hats on technical wizardry.

THE EWOK ADVENTURE is slated to be released as a theatrical feature overseas, where its effects shortcomings, particularly a jerky animation sequence of a monster chasing its tiny prey through the woods, should make moviegoers' jaws drop. Notwithstanding all of that, it probably sold a lot of Ewok dolls. Obviously, that's what counts. □

KORTY ON EWOKS

continued from page 49

animated feature, *TWICE UPON A TIME* (1983), which was a casualty of the Ladd Company's financial troubles when the company put all its promotional muscle behind *THE RIGHT STUFF*. The film was sold directly to cable TV after a few unsuccessful theatrical playdates. But the filmmakers remained friends, and, noted the soft-spoken Korty, "George doesn't like to work with strangers. He hires only people he trusts, so he came to me."

Lucas assured Korty he wouldn't have to "sit in an editing room for four months. I'm not interested in doing a high-tech film... my career ambitions don't lie in that area." Accordingly, another Lucas crony, Tom Smith, general manager of Lucas' effects facility, Industrial Light and Magic, for 4 years, spearheaded the technical end of *THE EWOK ADVENTURE*, which swiftly assumed a dominant role. For one thing, said Korty, "The most important aspect of the film became the matte paintings. We thought we could only budget eight to ten of them. We wound up with 40. We shot the whole film in and around Marin County, which is very beautiful, but is, let's face it, a suburban community, so a lot of the horizon backgrounds are buildings. We had to substitute matte paintings which would extend an eight-foot area around the actors, a patch of parched, cracked, yellow ground with a little puddle in it, for example, or an extraterrestrial forest into a full landscape."

That's not to say Korty didn't have his own hands full just dealing with actors. "The lenses for the Ewoks' eyes fog up in about 45 seconds, so we had to have Ewok wranglers, one for each of them, who would run up when I said, 'cut,' to remove the headgear. They used hair dryers without the heating element to cool the actors down, because the suits were thick with foam rubber padding and fur. We had an Ewok choreographer who would walk with me to find a path they could manage. The Ewoks were played by dwarfs, and the secret to their communication in the suits is body language. Warwick Davis, who plays the Ewok Wicket, is really Chaplinesque. He has curvature of the spine, but unlike most little people, he has fully developed arms, so he is very expressive which sets him apart from the others."

Korty said one reason Lucas wanted to make the film was to produce a suitable entertainment for his three-year-old daughter, Amanda, for whom features like *RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK* are too violent. But he also acknowledged the film's blatant impetus for the marketing of Ewok and *STAR WARS* gadgetry: "That's a part of every fantasy film now, isn't it? I think they're planning an animated series for TV, also. And it's possible they'll make a sequel to *THE EWOK ADVENTURE*." However, Korty is not likely to be involved in the followup. His next project is a speculative fantasy about a "21-year-old genius seeking the secret to the universe, which I hope to shoot in San Francisco next year." □

FRANKENWEENIE

continued from page 5

the attic laboratory where Oliver brings the dog back to life. "It was both Tim's and my idea to get the original Strickfadden equipment," said Hickson. "There was never any doubt in our minds that we wanted it, but it was hard to get. It was hard for Disney to understand why we wanted the equipment so badly until they saw it."

"It's one of those things that's like a dream come true when you first see that stuff," adds Burton.

The associate producer of *FRANKENWEENIE* is Rick Heinrichs, who produced Burton's earlier award-winning short *VINCENT* [13:4:10], also for Walt Disney Productions. It's the story of a boy who emulates his screen idol, Vincent Price, shot in stop-motion and black and white, and set to a rhyming narration by Price. One scene in the short, foreshadowing the concept of *FRANKENWEENIE*, shows a Frankenstein-like Vincent wiring up his dog to electrodes in an imaginary attic laboratory.

FRANKENWEENIE was originally slotted to begin production so it could go out with last summer's re-release of *THE JUNGLE BOOK*, but Disney decided to reschedule the \$1 million production for a late summer shoot and put it out with the Christmas re-release of *PINOCCHIO*. Because it was officially an "off the lot" production, shifting it onto the official schedule only gave the filmmakers two weeks of actual preproduction time.

"A lot of the rush is because Disney was trying to keep the production costs down," said Hickson. "There's an enormous overhead at the studio so we couldn't become official because then all these numbers start to be attached and we couldn't afford that. The actual production was a fifteen day shoot with a couple of months for post-production. We're really happy about being with *PINOCCHIO* because they'll be terrific together. They're both very primal stories. Ours is like a fairy tale, really."

"We'll have a beautiful black and white film with one of the best color movies ever made," said Burton. "*PINOCCHIO* is Julie's and my



Victor's mom (Shelley Duvall) helps decorate Sparky for Halloween.

favorite Disney movie, so we're real happy about this. It's basically been our first time working at a studio this way, and we love it. When I look at the stuff we asked them to make from the designs, I don't think we could have gotten it at any other studio. It's like Disneyland. When you look at Disneyland, there's a certain bent, it's subtle, but it really is different.

"It's been interesting in another sense too, in that shorts are harder to do than features, aside from marketing them, because with features, you have some idea of what your budget should be. But with shorts, it's hard for studios to know how much money they should give you or how much money they will make. The word around town a couple of years ago was that Spielberg was going to start a shorts unit, but we haven't heard anything since. Doing *VINCENT* really gave me insight into the world of short films though, and it's amazing because they really can generate opportunities for you."

But *FRANKENWEENIE* did not come to life at Christmas after all, although it received a short theatrical run in Los Angeles in December to qualify for Academy Award consideration. Two marketing test screenings for mothers and young children (roughly ages six through nine) held in late September earned the short a PG rating. The film features no gore

or on-screen violence (its sole bit of violence is the off-screen death of the dog in the beginning of the picture when it chases a ball into the street and is run over). But test marketing reportedly showed that mothers were worried about children possibly being led to try and play with electricity and concerned about the general "intensity" of the piece. Studio executives deemed the featurette unsuitable for pairing with *PINOCCHIO* and plan to release it later in 1985, probably with the August release of *MY SCIENCE PROJECT*.

Does Burton think his work is strange or too intense? "I really don't look at it so much that way," he said. "I think of it more like the old 'Silly Symphony' cartoons. What interests me is trying to give things like *VINCENT* and *FRANKENWEENIE* real feelings and emotions... not just make them funny all the time."

"We did *FRANKENWEENIE* as if the original story had never existed," continued Burton. "This suburban family is the Frankenstein family and the little boy is Victor, but it's not a nudge in the ribs type of thing. We don't have the family watching the Universal original as a foreboding of things to come. At least to me, the more you went with a heh-heh-heh mad scientist kid, the less impact the film had. I don't think this is a dark or macabre story, and we didn't try to make the dog something horrible. He brings the dog back to life because he really loves the dog. We tried to make the film as straightforward as possible, and I think it takes on a whole new light. I think the parts that are funny are still funny, but that you can also make the leap to being serious, like those old 'Silly Symphony' cartoons which are fun, but powerful and full of real feelings that stay with you a long time."

"It was amazing, to me, to be 25 and taken seriously with an idea like *FRANKENWEENIE*," summed up Burton. "That's where Richard Berger came in because he really understood the idea and was great about it... very supportive, and for people like us, that's an amazing thing, especially since it hasn't always been that way in the past. It feels great. It really does." □

Paul Bartel as Victor's weird science teacher, from whom Victor gets the idea to revive Sparky after watching the galvanic reaction of a dead frog's leg to electricity.



LETTERS



DUNE EDITING FAUX PAS

What in heaven's name prompted Universal (or whoever was responsible) to edit Thufir Hawat's death scene out of *DUNE* and give it an apparently happy ending?

The sloppy editing of *DUNE*'s ending is apparent to anyone who is even casually observant. Thufir Hawat is *clearly* visible at the end of the film standing in back of and in between Shaddam and Reverend Mother Mohiam as the captives are led into the Great Hall of Arrakeen Palace. Without warning and without explanation, he miraculously disappears from any subsequent shots focusing on the same area. Thufir *does* reappear, however briefly, after Feyd challenges Paul at a time when, according to the book, he should be dead.

Thufir Hawat does not deserve to disappear into oblivion without explanation and Freddie Jones doesn't deserve to have what promised to be one of his best scenes end up on the cutting room floor.

Paula Mastine
New Bedford, MA

SCI-FI IS NOT A DIRTY WORD

A little note to point out the inaccuracy of Al Jackson's letter regarding the term "sci-fi." [15:1:62] He says, "The term Sci-Fi was coined as a slur against bad SF films long ago..." regarding David Lynch's comment on "raygun/spaceship" science-fiction.

The term "sci-fi" was, in fact, coined by Forry Ackerman in the early fifties. Forry, as we all know, has an unmatched penchant for puns. Since the term "hi-fi" was then in the public mind, his abbreviation of "science fiction" was a cute, clever way of tagging the books and films of the time. Further, at that point in film history, there was not an abundance of "bad SF films," not yet, anyway.

The "sci-fi" term was picked up by *Variety* (known for its use of such near-words), and then by the general public. It's only been in the last fifteen years or so that purists have demanded that the more proper and stodgy "SF" be used to differentiate between "high art" and "schlock."

Ackerman coined the "sci-fi" term in good faith, out of his love for the world of fantasy and fun. Like "horse opera," "weepie," "blaxploitation," and "soap," the term "sci-fi" has come to represent an entire genre—sophisticated, simplistic.

Ted Newsom
Woodlan Hills, CA

STOP-MOTION BLUES

As a fan of stop-frame animation, I am quite disappointed that most modern features rely on cable controlled mechanics to blend live actors with certain creatures. Ever since the alien in *CLOSE ENCOUNTERS* there have been numerous *monsters* that are really no more than glorified muppets, such as in *E.T.*, *RETURN OF THE JEDI*, and *GREMLINS*.

I admit that some of it can be effective and there can be a variety of movement and expression, but I am always conscious of the creation being just an elaborate puppet. There was a certain magic about stop-frame that was fascinating and it is used very briefly in films nowadays.

To think that a man like Ray Harryhausen could spend months virtually alone in a studio, bringing a piece of rubber and metal to life, blending it with live action and making it all look believable by painstaking methods, truly evokes a real "sense of wonder."

Now all you need are masses of cables and wires, a whole group of

operators, and everyone goes "Aww..." when they see *E.T.* and *Gizmo* blink and smile. But to me it's entirely mechanical, and the real *soul* has gone from fantasy filmmaking.

Bruce Goodman
Essex, England

DARKSIDE MAKEUP

The corpse makeup on George Petrie, pictured in your article on *TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE* [15:1:15], is the work of a young makeup artist named Bryan Moore. He is the same special effects makeup artist who is responsible for the chest that erupts in flames in the "I'll Give You a Million" episode. Seeing that Tom Savini and Ed French are given credit for their work, it seems only fair that a new talent be recognized.

Shannon J. Shea
Alhambra, CA

CHANCE FOR GREAT FILM DISAPPEARS

In Volume 8, Number 4, you announced George Pal's plans to film *THE DISAPPEARANCE*, based on Philip Wylie's book of the same name. We all know that Pal died, and the project was put on ice. But has no one else discovered the potential of this story? Can't some producer or director take a look at his storyboards (8:4:4) and make something out of it? This story simply *must* be filmed, not merely because it would be a stunning adventure and effects show, but because of its unique message of understanding and mutual need. This could be one of the greatest films ever made.

Ulf Claesson
Gothenburg, Sweden

CORRECTIONS

In my *RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD* piece [15:1:21] I deliberately didn't mention *DEAD & BURIED* because Dan O'Bannon, despite receiving screen credit, did not write a word of the screenplay. Your editorial correction, inserting the film among O'Bannon's writing credits, is actually incorrect. My sources connected with the film and O'Bannon himself confirm this. Apparently, producer Ron Schusett felt that it would be easier to sell the project if O'Bannon's name was on it, and so O'Bannon agreed in exchange for a piece of the action.

Kyle Counts is incorrect in his review of *GREMLINS* [15:1:41] when he states that Spielberg "insisted that Dante add the shot of Gizmo pinned to the dart board..." The suggestion was actually made by a crew member as an easier way of doing a scene where the gremlins tortured Gizmo by banging him around like a baseball. Because the Gizmo mechanism tended to screw up a lot (the puppet was very difficult to control), the crew delighted in venting their hostilities toward it in the dartboard scene. (It was extremely popular at the dailies as well as being extremely easy to do).

Dennis K. Fischer
Los Angeles, CA

Your magazine listed Alicia Roanne Witt, who plays the part of Alia in *DUNE* [14:4/14:5:36] as 9 years old. Actually, her outstanding performance in the role was accomplished at age 7. She did this without any previous acting experience or training—Alicia has never even been to the movies.

Mrs. Robert H. Witt
Worcester, MA

There are several inaccuracies in the photo credits of the "Charles Band—King of the B's" article [15:1:15]. Both color photos are from a film that was titled *DIGITAL KNIGHTS*—not *DIGITAL DREAMS*—which has now been changed to *THE DUNGEONMASTER*. The character "Ratspit" is not the work of animator Dave Allen, but a live-action cable puppet built by John Buechler for the sequence he directed. Like-wise, the werewolf credited to John is a creation of mine, re-worked from my Florida stage show, "Conversation With a Vampire." In this same sequence, my brother Cleve constructed several ice-bound characters, including Albert Einstein and Jack the Ripper. We had both previously worked for Band on *METALSTORM* and were called in to help when director Rosemary Turko kept making last-minute changes.

I'm sure all concerned with the project would like to see the proper credit given, especially since acknow-



Hi Paul, What Cha' Dune

ledgement is one of the few rewards given on low-budget films.

Kenneth J. Hall
North Hollywood, CA

K. George Godwin was indeed hired to work as a member of my videocrew on DUNE in Mexico, though never "... as a video cameraman taping a record of the production..." as stated in your editorial [14:4/14:5:3]. I personally—as director-cameraman in charge of the crew—shot 80 hours of tape for "Making of Dune" programs.

Anatol Pacanowski
San Rafael, CA

In your article on David Stipes Productions [15:1:42], you credited the matte paintings for V:THE FINAL BATTLE to Jena Holman and Dan Curry. Neither had any involvement whatsoever in the mini-series. In fact, the paintings mentioned in the article were rendered by David Stipes. Other matte paintings, recycled from the first mini-series, were rendered (a year earlier) by Matthew Yurich and Dino Genakas, with the assistance of Michelle Moen.

You credited Marc Kolodziejczyk with the design and construction of the dragon rod puppet in the

nightmare corridor scene. Marc was, indeed, heavily involved in the shooting of that scene, but only as camera assistant. The credit for designing, building, and manipulating the dragon truly belongs to creature-maker Steve Czerkas.

I also want to mention that, although the title of the article implies that DSP was the prime effects contractor for THE FINAL BATTLE, in actuality Dream Quest Images was also heavily involved in motion control work for the show, under the supervision of Richard Bennett.

Adam Berger
David Stipes Productions

In your article about CITY LIMITS [14:4/14:5:13] and its production company, SHO Films, you mistakenly attribute the writing of the screenplay for SHO Films' previous production, ANDROID, solely to Don Oppen.

The screenplay was actually written by James Reigle and Don Oppen, based on an original idea by Will Reigle. The story was conceived by my brother and I in November 1981, and I brought it to Oppen.

James Reigle
Los Angeles, CA

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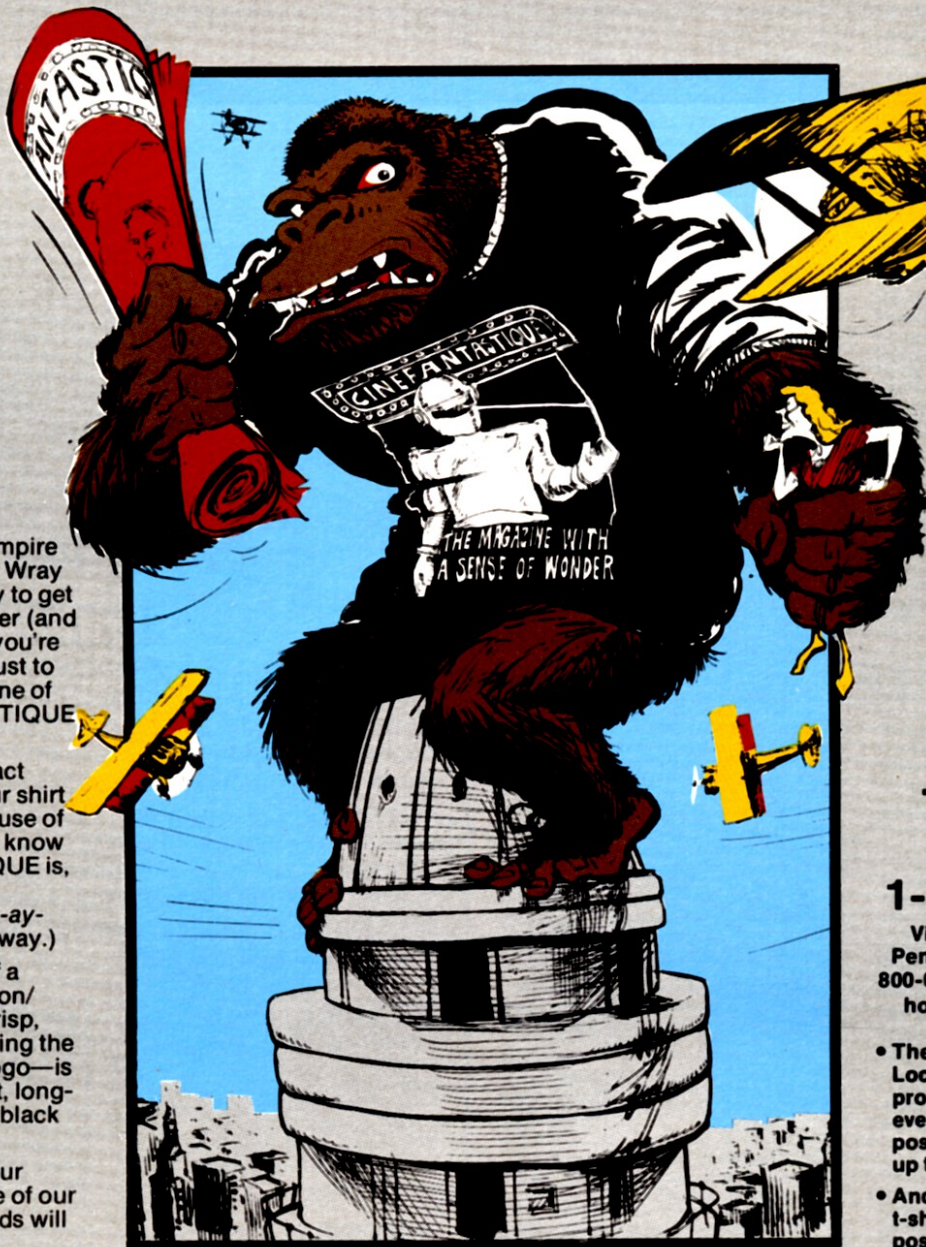
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